

JUDITH'S
GARDEN

MARY · E · STONE
✻ BASSETT ✻

PS
3503
A83J9

CORNELL
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY



FROM

Miss H.B. Sumner

Cornell University Library

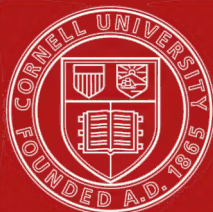
PS 3503.A83J9

Judith's garden.



3 1924 022 248 805

olin



Cornell University Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.



"I POINTED OUT THE ELFISH FACES THAT
MOST APPEALED TO ME."

See page 201

*Judith's
Garden*

by

·MARY·E·STONE·BASSETT·

*Author of
A Riddle of Luck etc.,*

Illustrations by
·GEORGE·WRIGHT·

LOTHROP
PUBLISHING
COMPANY,
BOSTON MASS.





COPYRIGHT, 1902, BY 
LOTHROP PUBLISHING COMPANY.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED 

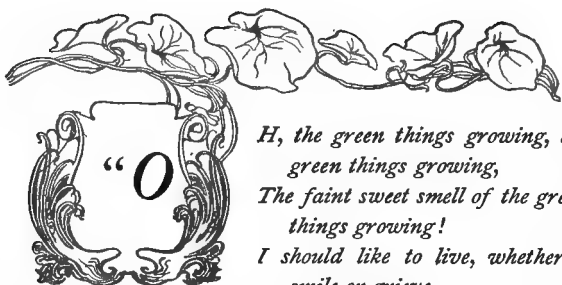
Published May, 1902 



Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

*TO MY
HUSBAND*





*H, the green things growing, the
green things growing,
The faint sweet smell of the green
things growing!
I should like to live, whether I
smile or grieve,
Just to watch the happy life of my green things growing.*

*"I love, I love them so, — my green things growing!
And I think that they love me, without false showing;
For by many a tender touch, they comfort me so much,
With the soft mute comfort of green things growing."*

CONTENTS



CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	I INTRODUCE MY GARDENER . . .	9
II.	THE COTTAGE BY THE RIVER . . .	36
III.	I ENJOY MYSELF	51
IV.	I LEARN OF ELLEN PATTY . . .	72
V.	A RIGHTEOUS SLAUGHTER . . .	84
VI.	I AM TALKED ABOUT	93
VII.	THE BITTERN'S NEST	101
VIII.	I CLAIM A FEW THINGS	118
IX.	MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF PRISCILLA .	125
X.	"A GOOD GARDEN IS A CONTINUED DELIGHT, A PARADISE" . . .	134
XI.	I LET MY SOUL GROW	145
XII.	I ENTERTAIN CALLERS	158

CHAPTER	PAGE
XIII. I BUILD AN AIR CASTLE . . .	177
XIV. HER HOME	191
XV. A DELIGHTFUL MORNING . . .	232
XVI. I INTRODUCE A RELATIVE . . .	245
XVII. I FIND A SUCCESSFUL HIDING PLACE	259
XVIII. I SOLVE A PROBLEM	268
XIX. I PAY A VISIT TO MY AUNT . . .	274
XX. AUGUST DAYS	286
XXI. A WILLING MESSENGER	294
XXII. MY GREENHOUSE	301
XXIII. I BUY ORCHIDS	316
XXIV. I RECEIVE MY REWARD	327

ILLUSTRATIONS



“I pointed out the elfish faces that most ap-
pealed to me ” *Frontispiece*

“Pat appeared not to watch me ” **PAGE** 44

“ ‘ Oh, yes,’ said one, ‘ I know Max Elliot ; we
were schoolmates ’ ” 95

“The moment Donald Warren looked at her,
I counted his heart well lost ” 296

I INTRODUCE
MY
GARDENER

I



AD I never fallen
ill, I might never
have had a garden;
and without a garden,
what use could I have had for
a gardener? So you, my dear reader,
would have lost the privilege of knowing
Patrick Monahan — the gentlest,
kindest old Irishman alive. For one
joyful summer he was my daily companion,
and his sound sense and ever
ready wit rendered my ideal garden a
practical blooming spot on earth.

I remember perfectly the day I was taken ill. My head felt strangely light, and the sense of decency and decorum, which always enables me to tell a polite falsehood, had vanished. For once in my life I told the bare truth. I admitted to myself that I was tired of doing the things I did not like to do; I even mocked at Duty. "Fie, fie!" said Duty, "you cannot escape me," and she fell to urging me, in a pious, lifeless voice, to go upstairs and do the weekly mending.

I told Duty, flatly, that I hated a needle; and I truly believed the little shining pointed thing had killed more women than all the diseases under the sun, — the mending could and would wait. Just then Miss Singleton called.

From my very soul I dislike Miss Singleton. You know yourself, there are people one can't like. She was of that sort,—a pious, fussy woman, exerting herself dreadfully hard to get to heaven. Of late she had taken to foreign missions. Now she had called to exhort me to join the missionary society.

Had I been myself, I should have concocted a polite excuse—expressed a mock sorrow, and gently refused her; but as it was, I took an unholy delight in replying to that woman. I told her I did not intend to join any society.

She inquired, sadly, if I did not feel concerned in the welfare of my antipode brother.

Now I have nothing in the world

against the heathen. I like him as well as any one else I am not acquainted with. It was Miss Singleton I objected to. I wanted her to go away and leave me alone. So I told her, plainly, I rarely thought of the heathen, unless he were specially called to my mind; and never thinking of him, how could I worry for him?

Miss Singleton left with horror on her countenance; but I have heard since, she excused me, saying, "She was not herself that day, poor dear!"

I only fear I was too truly myself. You know as well as I, we women keep our real selves behind bars, and it is our mock selves that daily appear.

The next person who happened at my parlour door was my cook. For

several years I had stood in awe of her; in truth, I feared her so greatly that I was forever propitiating her. This afternoon she looked wrathful and much upset.

“Shure, mum,” she exclaimed (standing upon the threshold, arms akimbo), “the work in this house is more than I kin attind to; I’ve decided to lave.”

Now, as she had reached this decision countless times before, but had always relented at my humble persuasions, Mary Ellen was somewhat surprised at my answer.

“Indeed,” said I, “I am delighted to hear it!” (I felt more like telling the truth.) “I only wish you had gone a year ago. The knee-bones to my pride are quite worn through persuading you to stay.”

She appeared speechless with amazement.

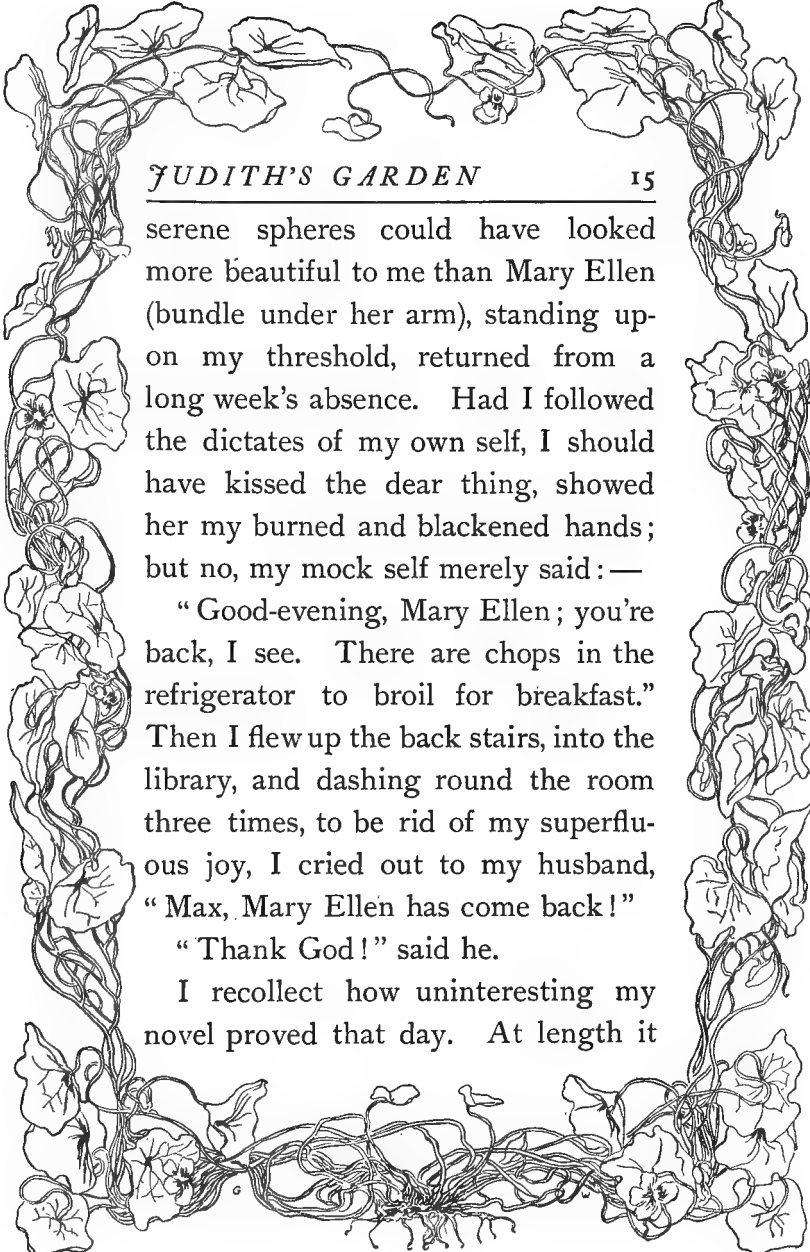
I resumed my novel.

By and by, she said in a still small voice, "Sha'n't I fetch ye a cup of tay, mum? Ye look pale."

"No, thank you," I replied sweetly.

When she had returned to the inferno (I mean the kitchen, but sometimes the term seems synonymous) I fell to thinking of her endless round of monotonous duties; of the tons of dishes that must yearly be cleansed. After all, was it any wonder that poor Mary Ellen's soul grew downward instead of upward?

The time her mother's cousin took sick and Mary Ellen went to nurse her, did I not follow day after day in her foot-tracks? No angel from the

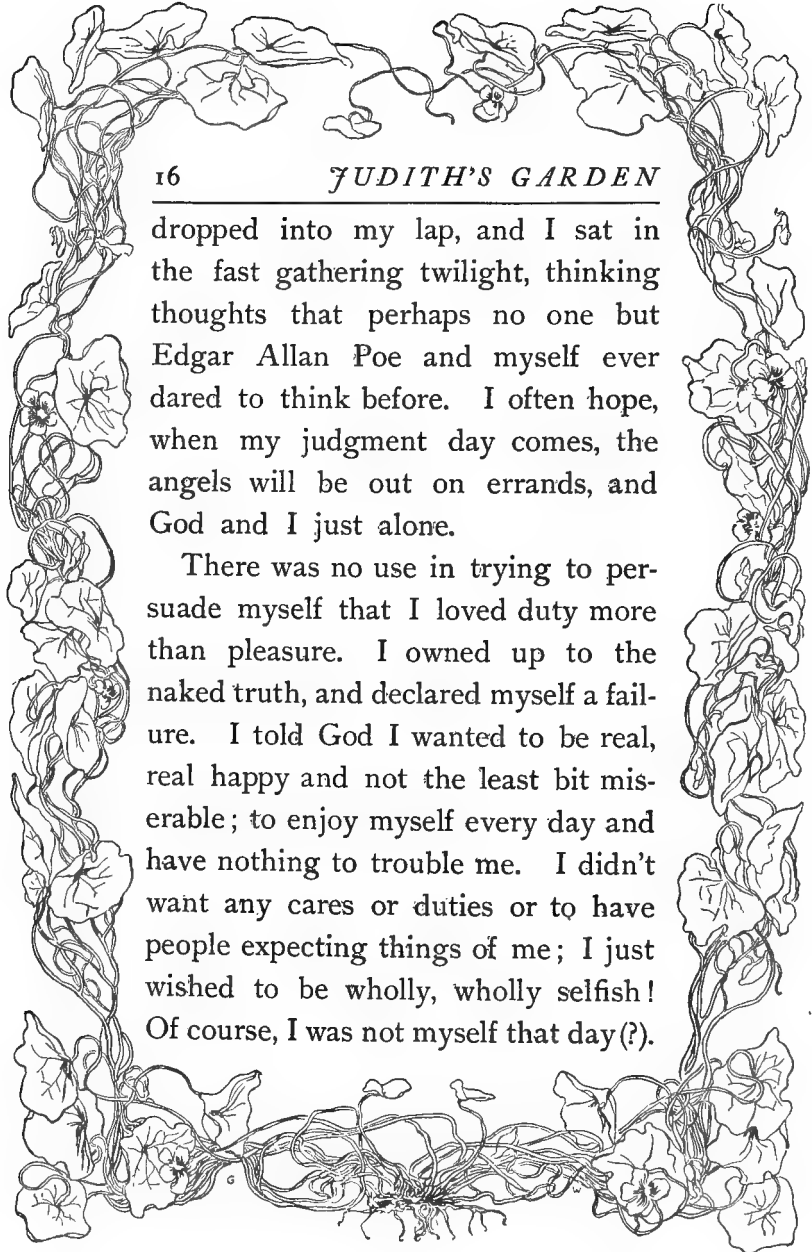


serene spheres could have looked more beautiful to me than Mary Ellen (bundle under her arm), standing upon my threshold, returned from a long week's absence. Had I followed the dictates of my own self, I should have kissed the dear thing, showed her my burned and blackened hands; but no, my mock self merely said:—

“Good-evening, Mary Ellen; you're back, I see. There are chops in the refrigerator to broil for breakfast.” Then I flew up the back stairs, into the library, and dashing round the room three times, to be rid of my superfluous joy, I cried out to my husband, “Max, Mary Ellen has come back!”

“Thank God!” said he.

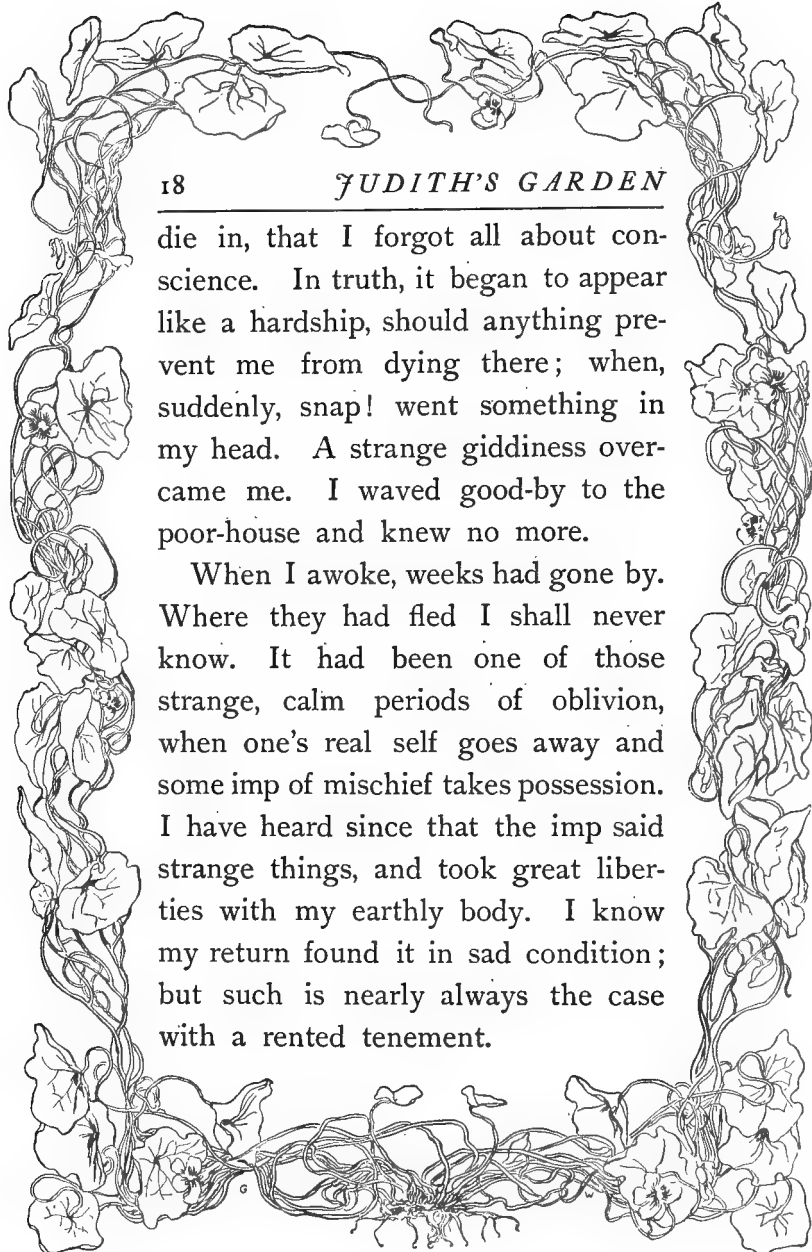
I recollect how uninteresting my novel proved that day. At length it



dropped into my lap, and I sat in the fast gathering twilight, thinking thoughts that perhaps no one but Edgar Allan Poe and myself ever dared to think before. I often hope, when my judgment day comes, the angels will be out on errands, and God and I just alone.

There was no use in trying to persuade myself that I loved duty more than pleasure. I owned up to the naked truth, and declared myself a failure. I told God I wanted to be real, real happy and not the least bit miserable; to enjoy myself every day and have nothing to trouble me. I didn't want any cares or duties or to have people expecting things of me; I just wished to be wholly, wholly selfish! Of course, I was not myself that day(?).

By and by, a disagreeable thing we call conscience came and smote me. It asked why my spirit was forever building air castles to dwell in, when it ought to be stopping at home digging the dust from corners and sweeping down the cobwebs. It made me reflect upon the little we had to live upon, and yet how serenely I spent that little; for I am neither practical nor saving. Maybe I should die in the poor-house? Well, if it came to that, I hoped the poor-house would be in the country, and the paupers would have to cultivate a garden. (I could enjoy that.) Then I hoped there would be a clover field near, and a wood in the background. I grew so interested, planning the sort of a poor-house I would like to



die in, that I forgot all about conscience. In truth, it began to appear like a hardship, should anything prevent me from dying there; when, suddenly, snap! went something in my head. A strange giddiness overcame me. I waved good-by to the poor-house and knew no more.

When I awoke, weeks had gone by. Where they had fled I shall never know. It had been one of those strange, calm periods of oblivion, when one's real self goes away and some imp of mischief takes possession. I have heard since that the imp said strange things, and took great liberties with my earthly body. I know my return found it in sad condition; but such is nearly always the case with a rented tenement.

The first sound I noted was the merry chirp of a robin outside my window. "Back again, lusty red-breast," I thought; "why, it must be spring is near. To-morrow I will pick lint for your nest." Then I realised that some one was bending over me, and out of a blue haze, like Indian summer, came Max's face. The dear old fellow (not that he is so very old, I just call him that) looked frightfully worried. The locks of hair above his ears were quite grey.

"Do you know me?" he whispered.

"Yes," I said — oh, so faintly! "I should know you in Spain, — your necktie is awry."

"Still criticising, my lady! You've come back to stay."

Then he sat down and sobbed, like a soft-hearted baby.

That convalescent period was not the most cheerful epoch in my life. You know it is far harder to get well than to fall ill ; and for my part, I had rather be quite sick than half sick : if you are quite sick you think you may die, and earthly worries fade ; but if you are only half sick, dying gets into the background and every little miserable worry seems to hug your pillow. Pestiferous frets that one would need a microscope to find when well, seem large enough to grace a museum as veritable giants.

I never realised before that I had so many duties. Why, the room was full of duties ! and whenever any one opened a door I saw a whole crowd

of them waiting outside, ready to push in. I used to wish I might evoke the spirit of Catherine de' Medici's esteemed courtier, and bid him mix me a poison to kill off duties.

I discovered that I was losing the faculty of building air castles; for just as soon as I got one nicely constructed, a duty would move into it, — and whoever heard of an air castle built for a duty?

When a friend called, my mind would revert with frightful rapidity to what I knew was an undusted parlour, with curtains all awry and pictures hung on the bias. One night I dreamed I saw my silver coffee-urn dancing before me on legs shamefully in need of polish.

"See how things are going on," hissed this same urn; "you had best make haste and get well."

Make haste and get well! Did you ever try it? If you have, you know all about it; and if you have not, well,—there is no use of prying into disagreeable things. I made haste, but I did not get well. Day after day I struggled, but to no purpose; and after a time, a luminous thought came to me: "Why should I take such trouble to live? I should certainly be obliged to die sometime; why not now? It might never be so easy again — I might not be so reconciled. Surely, it was best to slip away quietly and make an end to it. Only a peaceful little mound in the graveyard, and a respite from duties."

“A respite from duties!” I looked around the room, so crowded with those pious, long-faced creatures, and chuckled. I should outwit *them* yet. I began to plan my long journey.

To plan has always been my greatest resource, my one loophole of escape from the disagreeable things of life. In a room full of people, if I am not interested, I can fall to planning and see them all fade away. The longest and most tedious sermon is delightful to me when I have a plan on hand. I recollect well, when our minister preached his last doctrinal sermon, I planned to make over my winter hat—trimmed it, and was just sewing on the last ostrich feather when he said “Amen.”

I fear I lost sight of the gravity of

death, in planning how I should look as an angel. I wondered what sort of a robe I should wear, and how long my wings would be. What should I do? It occurred to me there were gardens in Paradise. Maybe the Lord would let me work in one of those gardens; dig and plant and sow to my heart's content. Then I should be satisfied.

Having settled my own occupation, my thoughts turned to Max. Of course I should wish him to marry again. I was not so utterly selfish as to desire a young man to spend a lifetime alone. He must certainly have a second wife. It gave me no little trouble to pick her out. I did not want her to be too good-looking, for in that case, Max might forget

me ; neither did I want her to be too homely, for then Max might be unhappy. I fully realised what a task I had on hand. Just then the doctor arrived.

"Little woman," he said, smiling down upon me, "you are not getting well as fast as you ought."

"It is too much trouble, doctor," I replied. "I've given it up."

He looked very grave. "That won't do," he said.

"Yes it will," I returned. "Don't you know, in this great universe, when *one* goes out, it is like a tiny drop of water spilled from a great ocean."

"Fudge!" he said, turned his broad back, and began to mix the medicines.

I don't believe there is any need to fear the valley of death ; for then and

there I went down into it. I found it dark only a little way, then light came. Beautiful flowers sprang along my pathway; I heard the sweet carol of birds, and saw before me that shimmering misty veil which separates us from the great beyond.

A moment more, I should have parted that veil and passed into the light forever; but a voice called me.

It was a tender, insistent voice — not Max's, or any relative's, but the voice of a woman who is strangely congenial to me. We have always thought alike. She is just as foolish and unpractical as myself, but oh, infinitely braver!

"Come back," she called; "I have need of you."

My friend was close beside me

when I opened my eyes; my breezy, out-door, forest-loving friend! She, to whom I told the very secrets of my nature, — the one being who wholly understood and sympathised with me.

As I looked at her, the great, wholesome, awakening spring seemed to steal in at the door. I saw the glad home-coming of the birds; and as my friend bent over me, she threw into my arms a handful of daffodils — lusty yellow blooms, fresh from mother earth. In a happy dream, I heard her repeat Wordsworth's lines: —

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high, o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee :
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company ;
I gazed and gazed — but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought.

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude ;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

I felt that I should get well.

Get well ! every day health seemed
springing to meet me. My friend
sat by my bed, and read to me a book
written by a woman who loved a
garden. Poor soul ! she was of high
degree, and it was denied her the
pleasure of digging and planting her
own soil. She felt this to be a great
sacrifice to blue blood.

That she was a quaint, curious soul, we both agreed; and we loved her. We told ourselves that Elizabeth must have originally inhabited the same planet from which we sprang. It was not likely we should ever meet her on this sphere; but we sent her some good invigorating thoughts.

Perhaps you have noticed, after being very ill, with returning health, how anxious people are to do for you? This only goes to prove that the green old earth is inhabited by true and loving souls; that good is everywhere in spite of evil.

Even Mary Ellen treated her slave royally. She made me broths that I never expected of her; and my toast had not a burned edge. Such is the kindness of the Irish heart.

Dear old Max was devotion itself.

One day he inquired what I should most like.

"To make a garden," I replied.

Max smiled; he is an editor, and knows nothing about a garden, unless it is to weigh a pumpkin, or to praise a beet in behalf of some country patron.

"You know," he said gently, "we cannot afford to hire a professional gardener."

"Who wants one?" I exclaimed indignantly.

"Why, who will dig the beds and plant the seeds?"

"I, myself."

He laughed outright. "You little mite of a woman," he said; "why, you are so thin, if there were a crack in heaven you could slip through it. I

imagine I see you digging and planting a garden." He kissed me and went away.

When people have something to tell you, how very important they appear! Their aura seems surcharged with expectancy. I knew Max had something to tell me the moment he entered my room that night.

I was sitting propped up in bed, partaking of gruel. I have always had the most sublime contempt for gruel, but now, with returning appetite, and not being allowed any other sort of food, I looked upon it as ambrosia. When my too scanty bowlful was eaten, I indulged in plans concerning gruel. I originated and compounded seventy different kinds of gruel, and seriously meditated pub-

lishing the recipes the moment I was out of bed.

"Hallo, there," said Max, jovially; "here's news for you! Tom Norton has rented me his cottage on the river bank for the summer. He is going to take his family to Europe."

I eagerly swallowed the last remaining drop of gruel.

"I closed with him," continued Max, "at a most reasonable figure; and now, sweetheart, if you hurry up and get well, you can start that garden right early."

Pretty soon he said seriously, "There is something else I must tell you. Mary Ellen gave warning this noon. Her mother's cousin is down with the lumbago, and Mary Ellen feels it her solemn duty to go and nurse her."

A diminished supply of gruel instantly rose like a black cloud before me.

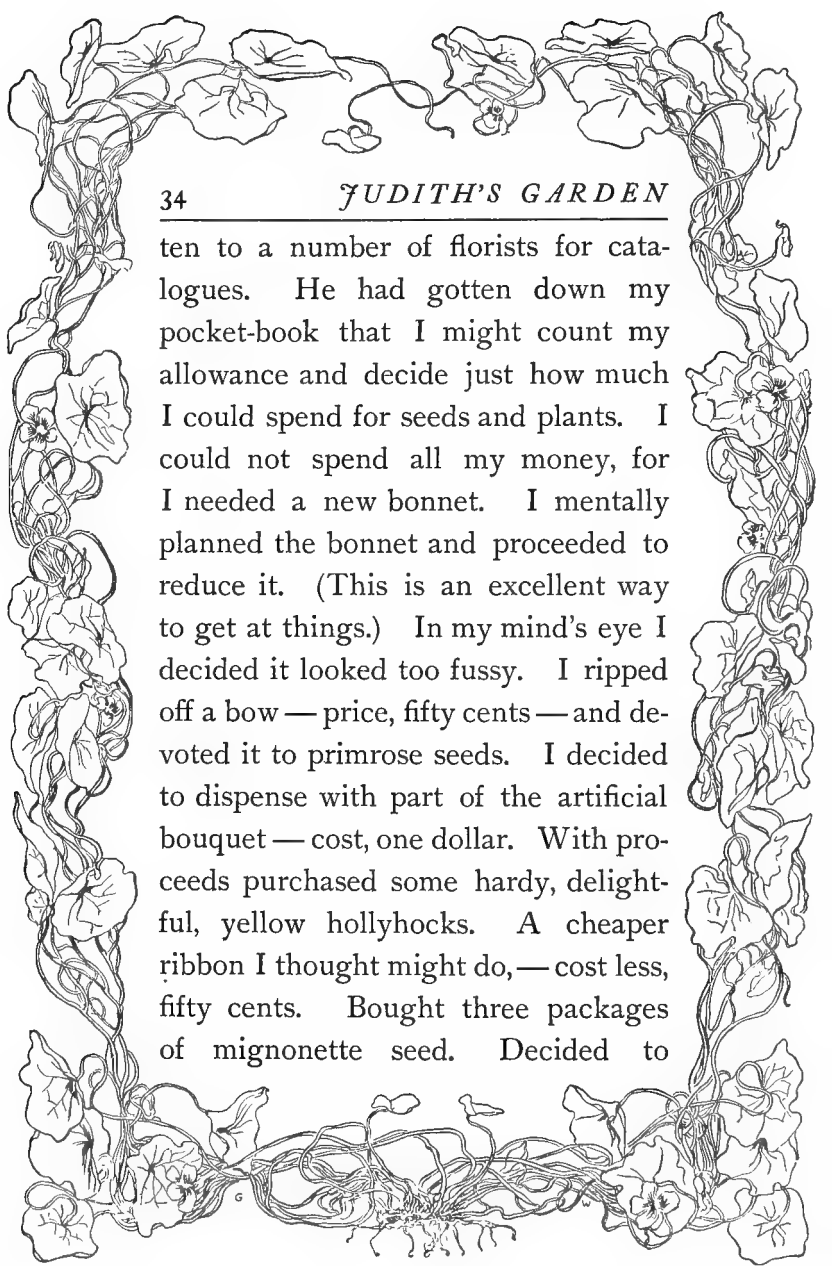
"Don't look that way," said Max, "listen: this very afternoon your washer-woman, black Rhoda, sent me word that Jim, her husband, died last week; and if you were needing help, she could come and cook for you."

"What a dispensation of Providence!" I murmured.

"Do you mean the death of Jim?"

"No, indeed; only, you see, I can't exist without a cook; and black Rhoda is perfection."

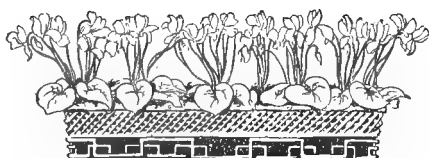
I know of no tonic that equals pleasant anticipations. Before I slept that night I had laid out a garden that never can or will blossom on this earth. To please me, Max had writ-



ten to a number of florists for catalogues. He had gotten down my pocket-book that I might count my allowance and decide just how much I could spend for seeds and plants. I could not spend all my money, for I needed a new bonnet. I mentally planned the bonnet and proceeded to reduce it. (This is an excellent way to get at things.) In my mind's eye I decided it looked too fussy. I ripped off a bow — price, fifty cents — and devoted it to primrose seeds. I decided to dispense with part of the artificial bouquet — cost, one dollar. With proceeds purchased some hardy, delightful, yellow hollyhocks. A cheaper ribbon I thought might do, — cost less, fifty cents. Bought three packages of mignonette seed. Decided to

dispense with the ribbon altogether, — one dollar. Bought a dozen golden glows. Determined to trim the hat at home, saving a dollar and a quarter; lumped the whole sum into sweet peas.

So I kept on, until I beheld before my dismayed eyes only the bare frame to my bonnet. Now it was no longer becoming or useful. I turned it into larkspurs; and while admiring their tall blue watch-towers, I fell asleep.



THE COTTAGE
BY *II*
THE RIVER



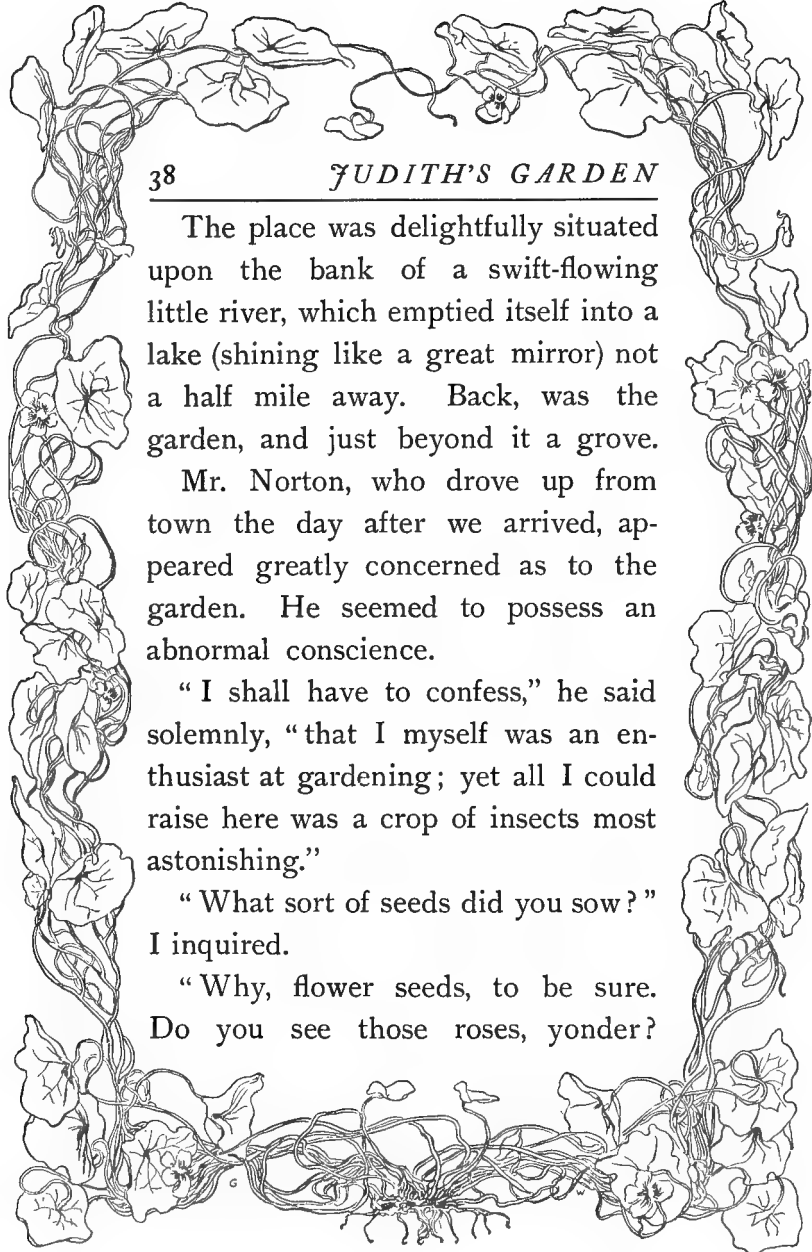
*W*HY have I devoted a whole chapter of my story to telling you about an illness, that to a well body seems little short of disgrace?

Yet, I feel sure you will condone my fault, when you recollect — after your own long illness — how fond you were of relating your symptoms to sympathising friends, — telling them how very, very low you were. Is it not a sort of compensation for ill health,

this too evident enjoyment in talking about it?

Had I been a well-regulated person, I should, no doubt, have felt remorse at leaving my household lares and penates; but being ill regulated, I coolly locked the door on my own possessions and moved into Mr. Norton's cottage.

The cottage boasted but six rooms and a little detached kitchen back, with a bedroom over it, devoted to black Rhoda. The floors were all covered with cool green matting, and the side walls wainscoted with the same. The furniture was willow—simple and cleanly. I must not forget to add that all the lamps possessed rose-tinted silk shades, making a harmony of colour that greatly pleased me.



The place was delightfully situated upon the bank of a swift-flowing little river, which emptied itself into a lake (shining like a great mirror) not a half mile away. Back, was the garden, and just beyond it a grove.

Mr. Norton, who drove up from town the day after we arrived, appeared greatly concerned as to the garden. He seemed to possess an abnormal conscience.

"I shall have to confess," he said solemnly, "that I myself was an enthusiast at gardening; yet all I could raise here was a crop of insects most astonishing."

"What sort of seeds did you sow?" I inquired.

"Why, flower seeds, to be sure. Do you see those roses, yonder?"

Last year, just as I had got them started, a perfect cyclone of insects struck them and stripped them of their leaves.

"And here," said he, mournfully, "was my aster bed. A cloud of swift-winged beetles hovered over it and ate the buds before they could blossom. In that corner I had hollyhocks; they took the blight. The sweet peas turned brown at the roots and faded. The nasturtiums fell victims to a long green worm, which ate faster than I could grow the plants. All this was quite disheartening; and since your husband has related to me how you have planned a garden, I feel I must tell you the truth, even if you determine to leave the place and move back to town."

He heaved a deep sigh and continued, "The vegetable garden fared no better. My cabbages and tomatoes took a worm, and the potato plants grew so densely populated that I hired a man to dig them up and burn them."

If it had not been such a pleasant day, the sky so divinely blue and the river shining in such merry sparkles through the trees, my heart must have sunk at these mournful descriptions of facts. But whoever profited by another's failure? I told Mr. Norton I was still undaunted and cheerfully waved him adieu.

Next morning, as I stood on the steps of the piazza, drinking in the glory of a perfect April day, I heard a stir behind me, and looking down, beheld the funniest old Irishman alive.

He was a short man, thin and wiry, with a long, shrewd face framed in iron-grey hair. A pair of pale blue eyes twinkled humorously under bushy eyebrows; and there was a sort of ruddy glow to his complexion which made him appear wholesome. I knew, at a glance, his had been an outdoor life. He was dressed in a checked gingham blouse and blue jean overalls. An old felt hat clung to the back of his head, and over his shoulder were a hoe and a rake.

"The top o' the mornin' to ye, mum," he said politely; "I've come to garden."

"Are you the man my husband hired?"

"Bedad, I am. Ses he to me yisterday, 'Me wife wants a gardener.'"

"Ses I to him, 'Oim the man fur her.'

"Ses he to me, 'D'ye love flowers?'

"Ses I to him, 'I'll lave the posies to tell ye that'; so I've come to garden."

"Can you stay all summer?" I asked.

"I can live and die wid yese," he replied.

"Then we may as well get to work," I said, smiling; "but you must remember, I am to be obeyed."

"I'll not be forgettin' yer the boss."

In an instant there was good comradeship between us. We stepped briskly across the lawn,—two diminutive figures, one in a red skirt and grey wash waist, with a straw hat on her head and a pair of loose garden-

gloves to protect her hands; the other, the stubby little Irishman, with hoe and rake across his shoulder.

I produced a chalk line, and Pat began to lay out a large bed on the lawn. In my mind's eye, I had seen this bed before. It was one of my cherished plans that it should become a great bloom of yellow stock.

Now, as we marked it out, a longing possessed me to help dig it up. There was nothing in the world to hinder me from digging. I thanked God I was only a common individual who could do as she pleased. It pleased me to dig.

"Bring two spades," I said to Pat, "I shall assist you."

He went away, and returned presently with these implements of gar-

dening,—one old and rusty, the other new and shining.

“Which will ye tak', mum?” he asked gravely.

“The new one, of course.”

Standing, tool in hand, I directed Pat to begin at one end of the bed while I attacked the other; then I jabbed my spade into the short, coarse grass.

I struggled valiantly, but I could not turn a sod. Pat appeared not to watch me, but kept lifting the brown earth with rhythmic precision.

At last, very red in the face, and not a little wrathful, I threw down the spade. “It is dull and needs sharpening,” I said.

“Did yese think, mum,” chuckled Pat, “thim little hands o' yourn could



"PAT APPLIED NOT TO WATCH ME"

turn the great brown sods? I'll do the diggin' whilst ye stick to the bossin'."

So we began our garden. When the bed lay smooth and dark against the green grass, ready for the seeds, two hardy robins pounced down upon it, and with stout yellow beaks, dragged forth reluctant worms. They gobbled them like gourmands, then flew away with a merry, "cheep, cheep!" as if thanking us for making things so easy.

I fell into a brown study over this particular bed. "Should I sow it to yellow stock, or should I not?"

Pat solved the problem.

"Phwat wud ye think, mum, to put red pinies in the middle o' the bed, and then plant marygoold all

round 'em? 'Twould make a foine sight!"

"Marigolds and peonies do not bloom together," I replied severely; for such a desecration of my garden made me shudder.

"No more do they," said Pat; "shure, I'd forgot. Then phwat wid ye say to a cockcumb or a princess feather?"

The poor old soul looked so simple that I was fain to hide my true feelings. My mind was made up.

"We will sow this bed entirely to yellow stock," I said. "How lovely it will look flaring out from yonder background of blue pines; quite like a cheerful bonfire." I hastened in for the seeds.

If Pat had had the pleasure of

digging the bed, it should be my good pleasure to sow it. I knelt and dropped the tiny black globules into shallow trenches, made by the handle of the hoe; then I raked the loose earth gently over them, all the time breathing a prayer to the God of Nature, that the yellow stock might grow.

By night, we (Pat, I mean) had dug up all the beds laid out by the enthusiastic but too easily discouraged Tom Norton. One we sowed to giant poppies; another, to mignonette; and still another, to blue larkspur. There was a long row of four-o'clocks, which led from Rhoda's kitchen door clear down to the little spring at the end of the garden. How gay they would look all in

bloom! Where the ugly board fence shuts off a pasture, we planted our yellow and pink and white hollyhocks; strong sturdy plants that I had purchased from a florist, and were guaranteed to grow. The bright red hollyhocks we set in a clump by themselves, for I dearly love intense splotches of colour. The ugly ice-house was to be completely hidden by morning glories.

I was having the best time jabbing chubby morning-glory seeds into the moist earth, when a voice startled me.

"Gardener, how doth thy posies grow?"

I looked up into Max's laughing face.

"You home, already!" I exclaimed.
"Why, what time is it?"

He held out his watch. It was six o'clock.

Where had the day fled? I looked into the western sky already tinged with gold from the departing sun, and realised that it was surely gone. Here I stood, clad in the same gown that I had donned upon rising. For me, in the delightful occupation of gardening, time had ceased to be.

"Max," I said solemnly, "I never understood before what it means in the Bible, where it says, 'A thousand years are but a moment in the house of the Lord.' David must have been gardening when he wrote that."

"How do you like your Irish gardener?" asked my husband, irrelevantly.

"I love him!" I cried enthusiastically.

cally; "that little brown wrinkled man is the man for me. I love him, because he has such stout arms to dig up the dirt, because he can handle a wheelbarrow so dexterously, and—and, because he, too, loves a garden."



*I ENJOY
MYSELF*

III



WISH I could describe my garden in such glowing terms that every woman in the world would want a garden. What an exodus there would be from the cities, and what a scrambling after every available bit of land! Truly, then, the desert would blossom like the rose, and the women who are tired, sick, and discouraged, would grow healthy and happy; for discontent never stops

long in a garden, or unhappiness either.

If the whole world took to gardening like me, milliners would be obliged to go out of business; but the florists would all get rich.

"Sunflowers," said Pat Monahan, "they're the bonniest phwat grows. Bedad, when I see their brown faces and yellow frills turning to the sun, I'm in hopes purgatory will be set round wid a row o' them."

I leaned pensively on the handle of my rake.

"Why, purgatory, Pat?" I inquired.

"Shure, mum, 'tis there I expect to shtop a spell."

I came round where I could look into the brown, wrinkled face. He

was carefully planting some pink primroses that had been sent to me by my favourite friend.

"Set the primroses," she had written, "between two rows of pink geraniums. They will grow tall, and their delicate blooms, rising from the deeper pink of the geraniums, will give you a symphony in colour."

We were obeying her.

"Bedad," continued Pat, "I've no notion for purgatory; but how kin I shlip through it?"

"Don't believe in it, Pat," I said. "We make our own purgatories—our own hells; and—and, I sometimes think, our own heavens."

But Pat was not to be caught in an argument. Although I expect he looks upon me as a heretic of

the worst sort, he will never own to it. Now he said, "Shure, I'm forgittin', — I've fotched ye some irishes."

"Irishes?"

"Yes, mum; and they likes their feet in the wather. So by yer lave, we'll plant them along the brook. I'll go for thim."

He returned presently with a large basket filled with bulbs. "Why, Pat," I exclaimed in delight, "these are irises! Where did you get them?"

His stubby little foot tapped the hoe for a moment. "Shure, I riz airly and made a trip for thim," he said. "They grows in the medder belongin' to that quare ould gintleman, Electrical Brown."

"He might miss them!"

"Whoo!" cried Pat, "not he! He's that daft o'er inventin' things, he'd not know an irish from a hin-hawk."

I held out another primrose.

"'Twas but four," continued Pat, "when I left me shanty; but bedad, as I was diggin' the irishes, who should coom along but that limb o' Satan phwat works for the Browns. She wor chasin' an ould black hin — a-runnin' her down fur dinner.

"Whin she sees me, she let out a shrake thot 'ud stir the dead, and fell into a fit."

"Which, the hen or the limb of Satan?"

"The limb o' Satan, shure! Thar she lay on the wet sparklin' grass loike one dead. If I hadn't heerd o'

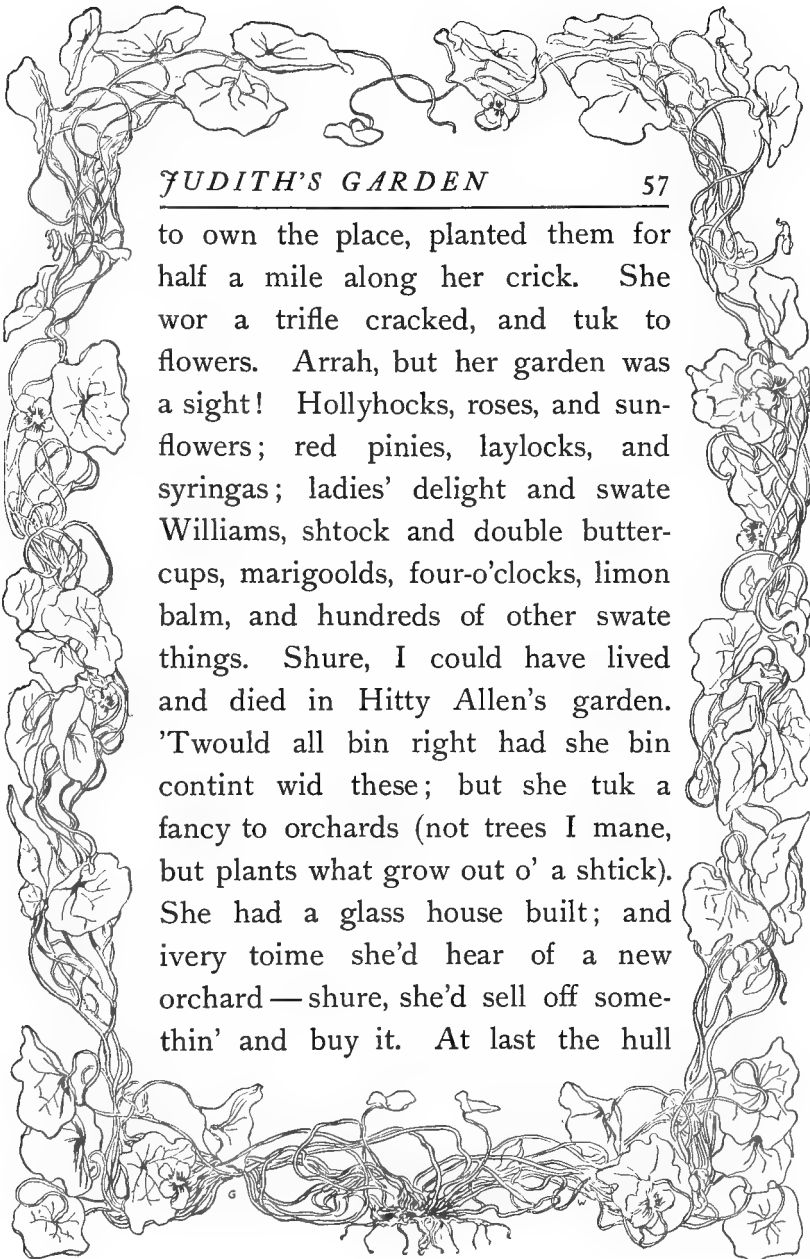
her thricks afore, I'd thot the sight
o' a man had kilt her.

"Wall, I shouldered her and carried her back to the house; then I run down the hin for her. The black divil (beggin' yer pardon, mum) had legs like a shpider. She run round the medder tin toimes a-squawkin'; but, begorra, I fotched on her; now she's in the pot, shure enuf.

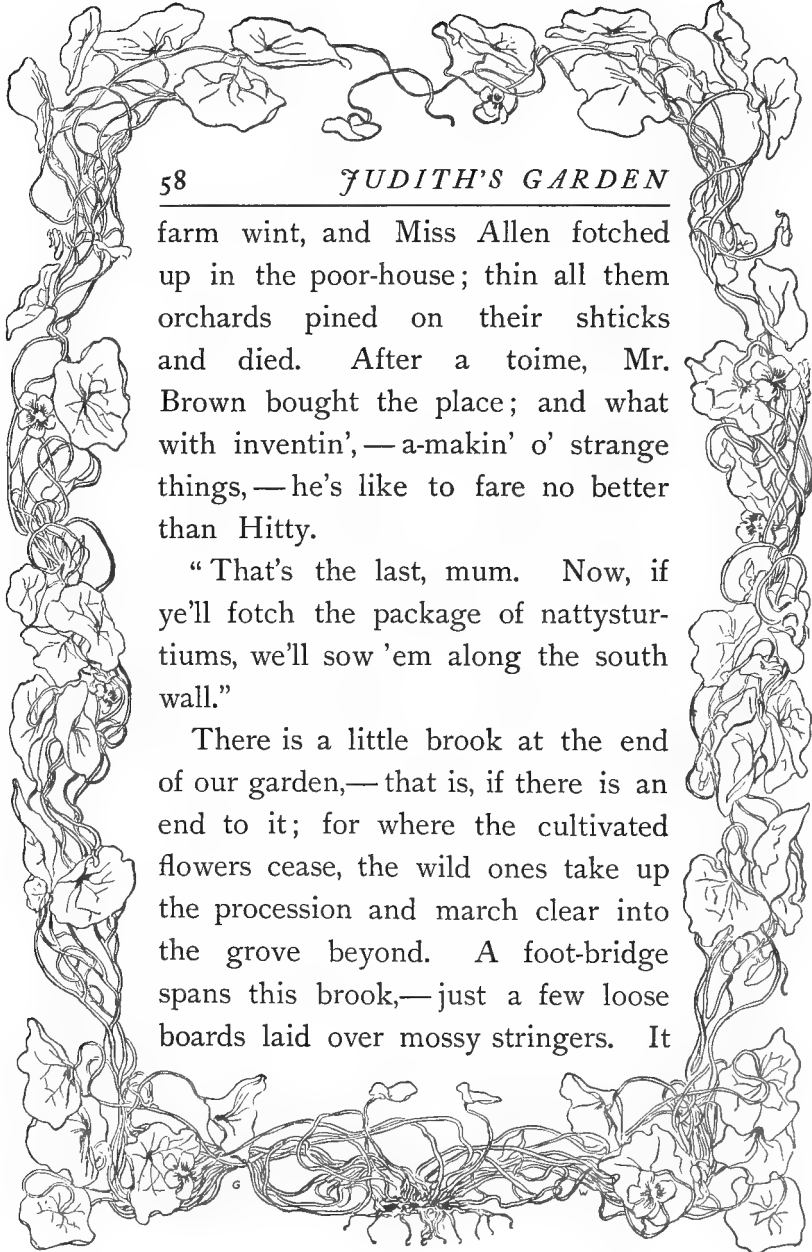
"By thot toime, 'twas getting late; but I was na' to be fooled. I digged the irishes; yit I do belave, upon me howly soul, the pink one escaped me. Niver moind, I'll have her to-morry."

"Pat," I said thoughtfully, "are not all wild irises blue?"

"Thim's not wild; shure, thim's tame. Ould Hitty Allen, what used



to own the place, planted them for half a mile along her crick. She wor a trifle cracked, and tuk to flowers. Arrah, but her garden was a sight! Hollyhocks, roses, and sun-flowers; red pinies, laylocks, and syringas; ladies' delight and swate Williams, shtock and double buttercups, marigoulds, four-o'clocks, limon balm, and hundreds of other swate things. Shure, I could have lived and died in Hitty Allen's garden. 'Twould all bin right had she bin contint wid these; but she tuk a fancy to orchards (not trees I mane, but plants what grow out o' a shtick). She had a glass house built; and ivery toime she'd hear of a new orchard — shure, she'd sell off some-thin' and buy it. At last the hull



farm wint, and Miss Allen fotched up in the poor-house; thin all them orchards pined on their shticks and died. After a toime, Mr. Brown bought the place; and what with inventin',—a-makin' o' strange things,—he's like to fare no better than Hitty.

“That's the last, mum. Now, if ye'll fotch the package of nattysturtiums, we'll sow 'em along the south wall.”

There is a little brook at the end of our garden,—that is, if there is an end to it; for where the cultivated flowers cease, the wild ones take up the procession and march clear into the grove beyond. A foot-bridge spans this brook,—just a few loose boards laid over mossy stringers. It

is a trickling, merry sort of a stream, widening into a little pool farther down, where a small colony of blue flags stand with set steely spears. The red-winged blackbirds build nests among these rushes, and some happy day I am going to wade in and spy upon them.

Of course no well regulated woman would wade; but some day, when Pat is at the farther end of the garden and there is not a soul in sight, I shall pull off my shoes and stockings, hide them on a stringer under the bridge, then stepping gingerly in—with shudders of delight—I shall paddle down to the village of Sweet Flag. How cool the swift-running water will feel on my feet, and how I shall slip on the stones! Ah, I shall

enjoy myself; how I shall enjoy myself!

It was along this same brook that Pat and I had planted the irises; for I so admire a little stream fringed with flowers! In the springtime there is a city of blue violets on its mossy banks; and just below the blue flag blossoms, clumps of yellow cowslips.

There is something very lovable about cowslips; I like to kiss them and call them pet names,—they seem such children of the sun, in their shining golden robes.

“Cowslips!” says Pat, indignantly; “gooldslips, I say; though, to be shure, the cows may rilish ’em.”

I did a very wicked thing yesterday; and now that it is too late to

mend, I am repenting over it. I cannot say that I did not enjoy doing it; for at this moment my spirit declares, I liked it so well I shall do it again. This was the way of it:—

My husband was to bring home a certain person to dine with him,—the sort of person, one feels compelled to fill up with all the eatables the house affords. I had Rhoda at it early in the morning and, out of compliment to the coming capacious stomach, got my own lunch in the kitchen,—a piece of toasted bread and a glass of lemonade.

Now, this same individual quite ignores me,—in truth, he dislikes women; and knowing this, I determined not to have an unpleasant thing in sight at the feast; so about

four o'clock I unlocked our boat, and slipping into it, rowed down the river to the lake.

There are days when one feels no need of heaven. This was one of them. I hope I shall not die on such a day, for it would be asking too much of me to leave the earth; rather, give me a rainy, sullen day. I sometimes fear I ought to have died when I was reconciled; for now that I am so filled with the joy of garden-making, the love of lake and river, how can I die? "I will not die, I will live and praise God right here on his own green earth; I will be his healthy, happy, outdoor child." So I thought as I rocked in my boat on the shining lake under the blue tent of heaven.

I feel sure that the birds have a language of their own; that they make plans just the same as some other folk, who do not wear feathers. At any rate, there had been a concert planned to take place this afternoon, in the maple grove. I was just in time for the overture.

It began with soft low twitters like the sweet complainings of stringed instruments; then it gradually increased in warbling, thrilling melodies, until it burst into a great pæan of praise:—

“Glory be to the God of nature! praise to His wondrous works!”

I listened, and my whole soul seemed to float from me—to rise and join that feathered choir in glad

thanksgiving; glad to be alive, glad to know God! "O dear, great, precious outdoors," I cried; "how I love you!"

The concert lasted just one hour; then it died away to low, tender chirps. Presently I heard a rustling of many wings; a little dun-coloured cloud rose from the maples and sailed southward.

I rowed about awhile, then looked at my watch. It was already after six. Max must be home, and the feast was being spread. With no petticoated individual around, how our guest would enjoy talking business!

I felt quite virtuous over the sacrifice I had made in his behalf.

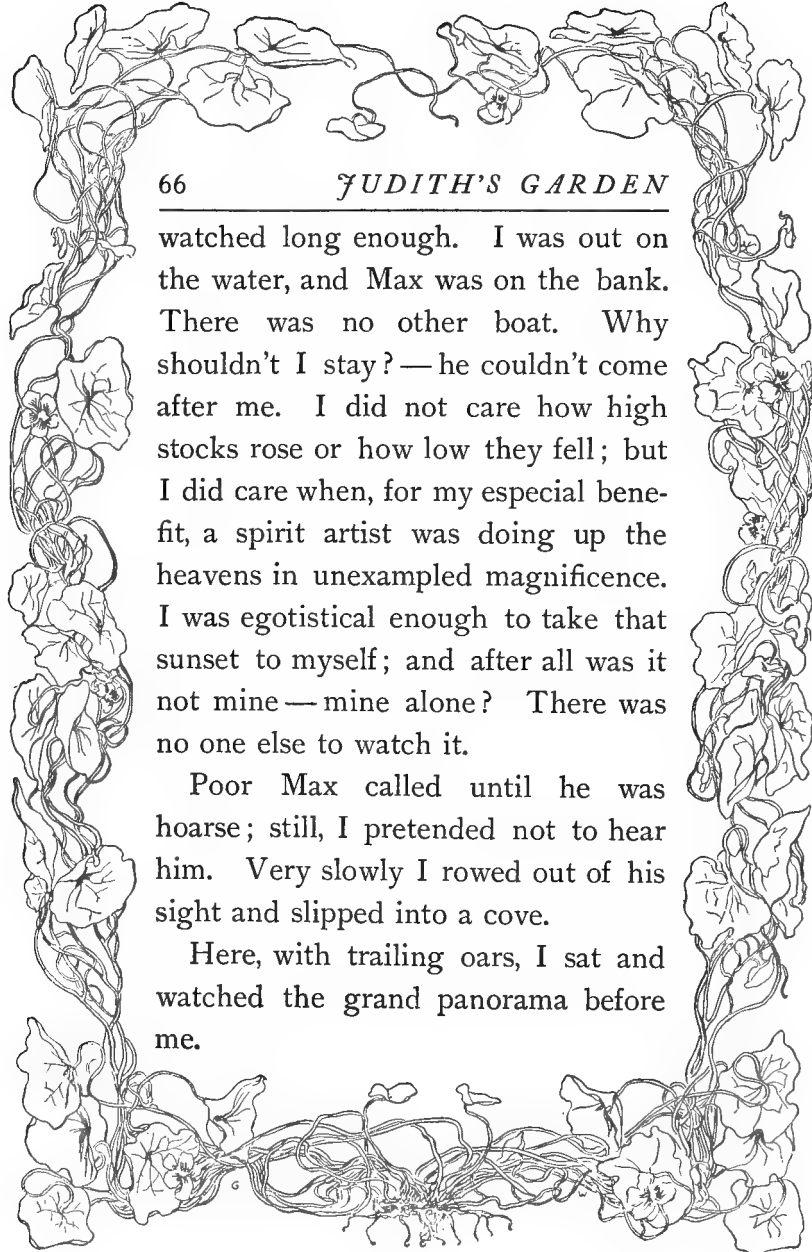
Pretty soon a little party of tip-ups

attracted my attention; they were about to wade out on the broad pads of the yellow nuphars, to catch water beetles.

Now, if you have ever watched these funny little birds, tipping and tilting on the unstable lily pads, you will know that, with such a sight in view, it was impossible for me to leave.

At last I heard a faint "hullo!" and down on the river bank I beheld Max, frantically waving a white rag at me.

Should I go back? I half turned the boat about, then I saw the sun dipping into the west, a great molten ball, and all around the horizon clouds racing to catch his last radiance. We were going to have one of those superb sunsets that I have never



watched long enough. I was out on the water, and Max was on the bank. There was no other boat. Why shouldn't I stay? — he couldn't come after me. I did not care how high stocks rose or how low they fell; but I did care when, for my especial benefit, a spirit artist was doing up the heavens in unexampled magnificence. I was egotistical enough to take that sunset to myself; and after all was it not mine — mine alone? There was no one else to watch it.

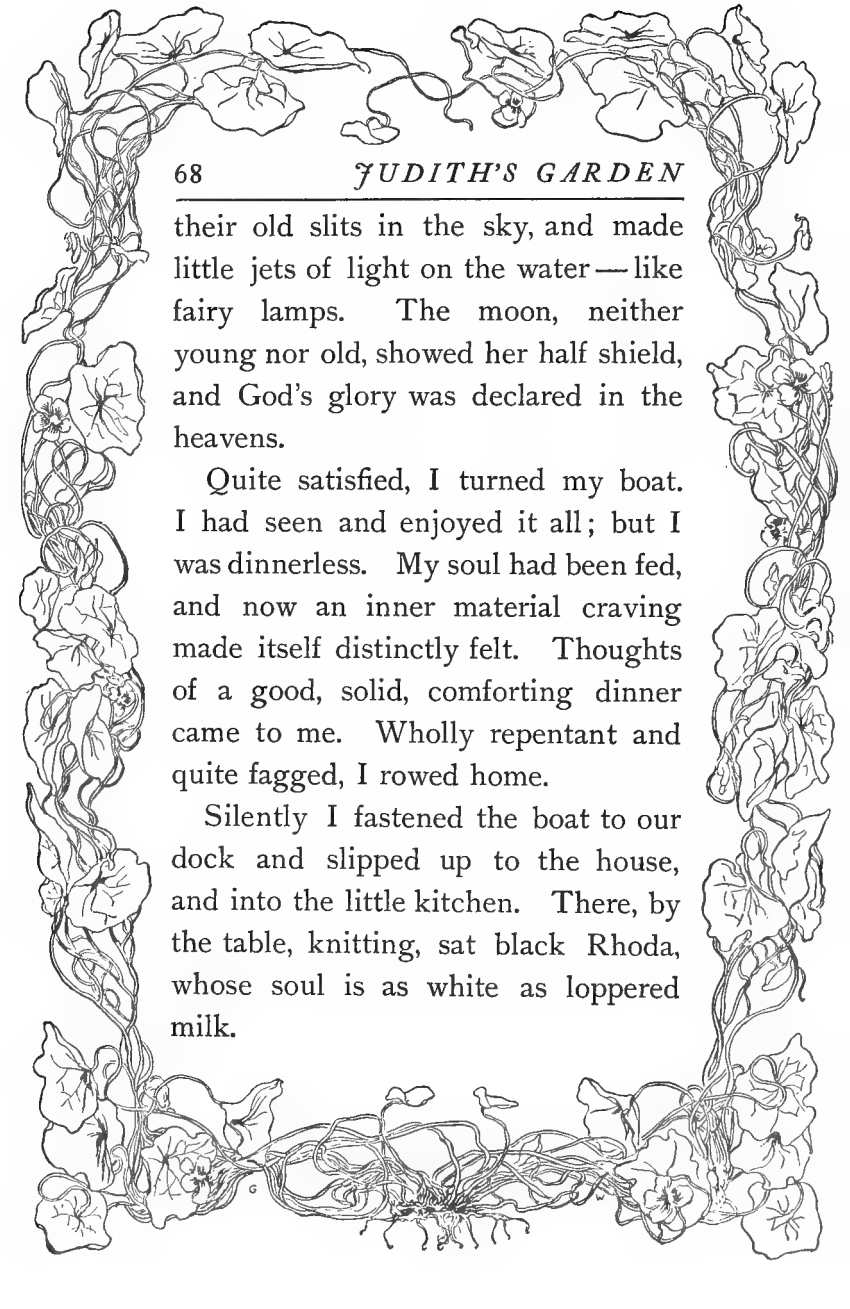
Poor Max called until he was hoarse; still, I pretended not to hear him. Very slowly I rowed out of his sight and slipped into a cove.

Here, with trailing oars, I sat and watched the grand panorama before me.

I saw the lake blush and all its little ripples silenced, as if the hand of peace were suddenly laid upon it. Cloud after cloud robed itself in glowing colours, and the west was a vast sea of molten gold—stretching to unknown shores. I did not wonder, then, that the ancients called the sun “God’s eye.” Was it not our good and gracious Monarch—our Ever Giving?

After a while the pageant was all over. A wrinkled daffodil curtain was slowly let down, and out of its subdued depths trembled forth the evening star—a golden rose upon the bosom of the night.

How still it was! The shining grey water deepened to purple; still I waited. The stars slipped through



their old slits in the sky, and made little jets of light on the water — like fairy lamps. The moon, neither young nor old, showed her half shield, and God's glory was declared in the heavens.

Quite satisfied, I turned my boat. I had seen and enjoyed it all; but I was dinnerless. My soul had been fed, and now an inner material craving made itself distinctly felt. Thoughts of a good, solid, comforting dinner came to me. Wholly repentant and quite fagged, I rowed home.

Silently I fastened the boat to our dock and slipped up to the house, and into the little kitchen. There, by the table, knitting, sat black Rhoda, whose soul is as white as lopped milk.

"Rhoda," I asked in a subdued voice, "is there any dinner left for me?"

"Bress yor heart, honey, is there dinner left for you! Rhoda don' forgit her chile. Don' I cut off de tenderest bits ob eberyting, and puts 'em one side for you? Mos' anyting good enuf for men folks, but my honey's got to hab de best."

Her honey sat down and ate up those tender bits in very short order. I could not doubt they were the best the dinner afforded.

When Max returned that night, from taking our guest (his guest, I mean) to the station, to catch the train for New York, I pretended to be fast asleep; but the dear old fellow was not to be deceived.

"See here," he exclaimed, giving me a little shake, "why didn't you come home for dinner?"

"What dinner?" I murmured sleepily.

"Don't be silly! Come, answer me!"

"Oh, I believe I was watching the sunset."

"I dare say, and enjoying yourself. I never saw a person who can so enjoy herself in her own way, no matter how other people feel about it. However, you lost a good dinner." (This last, with intense satisfaction.)

At first I was inclined to allow him this solace; but being naturally truthful, my conscience would not hear to it.

"No, Max," I said gently, "Rhoda

saved me some of everything. She said, 'Mos' any kind o' victuals is good enough for men, but my honey must have the best.'

"I'd like to shake Rhoda," he said.

I made no reply, as I have learned that an injured, passive silence is the best attitude to conquer Max.

I was dropping off to sleep when the dear old fellow's hand reached out and clasped mine.

"Listen, honey," he whispered, "I agree with Rhoda."

And it was this last remark that set me thinking. I shall never slip away from Max's guests again; unless — well, we should happen to have one of those unrivalled sunsets.

*I LEARN
OF
ELLEN PATTY*

IV



MARY, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?"

called Max, as he stepped out on the piazza, and found me, vainly searching for seeds that never came up.

"You would be out in my garden more frequently," I replied, "could you find the pretty maids all in a row."

"What man wouldn't?" said Max. "But come in to breakfast; I smell

Rhoda's coffee, and its scent is more ambrosial to me than a whole bed full of posies."

Is it not strange? We sow seeds with good intentions and they never come up. I feel like weeping when I think of the lost opportunities of my garden. According to my own calculation, my summer bonnet was sown in vain. Not a seed arose from that sacrifice; yet I devoted the whole amount of it to packages — guaranteed to grow.

Pat said, "Shure, the sile was too dhry fur 'em!"

"No, Pat," I replied; "I watered them every day, myself."

"Thin, they wor too wet."

"That could not be."

"Wall, then," concluded Pat, "seeds is loike some folk, — they niver does

phwat yer expectin' o' 'em; they're thot contrarie."

I looked regretfully at my bed of giant poppies; at the bare borders that ought now to be covered with green annuals. I resolved to sow more seed—even should I sacrifice my winter bonnet. I hurried into the house and wrote the order; then I returned to the garden.

Pat met me with a little twinkle in his eye which suggested all sorts of pleasant surprises. He informed me that he had "fotched" me something.

We hurried down the path to the brook; and there, laid carefully on the bank, were several great tufts of forget-me-nots, — all alive with tiny blue flowers.

"Ain't thim a sight to faste yer

eye?" said Pat, — "the swate darlints!" and the old man removed his hat and knelt before the offering.

"Arrah, thim's the flowers fur me; I loves 'em!"

"Indeed, they are beautiful, Pat. Where did you get them?"

"Shure, 'twas this mornin' as I was whalkin' thru' the medder, I met the limb o' Satan. She wor sane enuf, this toime. Ses she to me, 'Good-mornin', Mr. Monahan!'

"Ses I to her, 'The top o' the mornin' to ye, Belinda!'

"Ses she to me, 'Thanks, fur ketchin' o' the hin.'

"'Don't mintion it,' ses I.

"Ses she, 'I hear yer new missus loves flowers.'

"'Bedad, that she does,' ses I.

"Ses she, 'May loike she'd be pleased with some fur-git-me-nots?' Thin she led me to a turn in the crick, and, by me howly soul! if there warn't a whole patch o' 'em; planted years ago by Hitty Allen. They wor as blue as the sky.

"' Hilp yerself,' ses she.

"I dug up some, thin I picked a bokay fur ye;" and Pat held up a great bunch of the tiny blue flowers.

He did not give them to me at once; but stood looking at them, a wholly tender light in his little faded blue eyes.

"Arrah," he said softly, "'tis back forty year and more the sight o' thim flowers takes me, — whin I left the ould country for Ameriky. Shure, I'd kissed the ould folks

good-by, and wid me bundle over me shoulder, I was jest shteppin' out o' the lane, when I met Ellen Patty.

"Ellen Patty was not much to me, thim days; for I was just a lad runnin' over wid adventure; but thar she stood in the lane, dressed in a frock as pink as a June rose, her sunbunnit hiding her eyes, and in her hand a bunch o' furgit-me-nots.

"'Good-by, Ellen Patty,' ses I.

"'Good-by, Pat,' ses she in a trimblin' voice. 'Here, tak these furgit-me-nots. I picked 'em fresh from the braes fur ye.'

"As I tuk the swate blue flowers, me heart slipt out o' me brist for Ellen Patty. I knew thin she wor the one lass in the world for me; but there was na toime fur courtin'.

“‘God bless ye, Ellen Patty!’ ses I. ‘I’ll niver furgit ye. Say once ye love me, that I may be hearted fur me long journey.’

“Shure, I had to bend close to hear the answer, her voice wor so low and swate. Ses she, ‘I love ye, Pat; and I’ll allus be faithful to ye.’

“Thin I stole a kiss from her red lips, and clapping me bundle over me shoulder agin, I made off. I have thim furgit-me-nots yit.”

Pat dug the toe to a stubby boot into the gravelled walk.

“Did you return and marry Ellen Patty?” I asked.

“I didna,” said Pat. “I married Bridget Flannigan. She’s a good cook.”

“But what became of Ellen Patty?”

"Phwat becomes of thim ye loves best?" murmured Pat; "shure, they dies. Ellen Patty's little feet strayed hivenward. E'er I'd bin but one short year in Ameriky, they wrote me she wor dead."

"Oh, Pat!"

But the old man was bending over the forget-me-nots, and I could not see his face.

"After a toime," he said, in a short, dry voice, "I up and married me ould woman."

"And she makes you a good wife?"

"Shure," he replied; "no one will starve round Bridget. She's grate fur atein'. Begorra, but she's fotched her own weight up to nigh three hundred pounds. 'Tis a sight she is."

"Does she love flowers, Pat?"

"Flowers is it? Bridget love flowers! If I so much as set a posy in me yard, she'll plant a cabbage top o' it. There's nothin' she hates loike flowers. She ses they're no good a-tall a-tall, since they can't be biled an' ate."

Pat began to dig viciously along the bank of the stream; now he bent and placed a tuft of forget-me-nots.

"Have you any children, Pat?"

"We had jest one," he said, in a low voice; "a wee bit o' lass."

"And —?"

"Shure, she died, too.

"Whin she wor born," said he, presently, "me and Bridget got into words. Ses I, 'We'll call her Ellen

Patty.' Ses me wife, 'No, we'll call her Mary Ann, after me sister.' Ses I, 'We won't.' Ses she, 'We will.'

"So we argyed the thing, fur six weeks at laste; then I sint fur the praste.

"'Twor a foine day the father come. Ses I to him, 'Shure, Father Dougherty, how would ye loike a row on the lake?'

"'Jest the thing,' ses he; 'I'd loike it.'

"So I tuk the best sofy cushion and a bit o' carpet, and fixed up the boat suitable to his riverence; thin we rowed out on the shinin' wather, and twixt two hivens, as it wor, I told him the story of me love fur Ellen Patty.

"Whin I'd done, ses he, soft loike,

'Why don't ye name yer baby Fur-git-me-not? 'Twill always remind ye of Ellen Patty.'

"Shure, me wife could not shtand out against his riverence; so the baby got the name."

"How long did she live, Pat?"

"Four years. She wor ould enuf to call me daddy, an' to love me. Many's the day I tuk her wid me, and I allus cared fur her the night. Shure, she'd that love fur posies, 'twould do yer heart good to see her, smilin' an crowin' at thim; an' she wor always noticin' the birds an pintin' to 'em. One night she tuk the croup and died."

Pat huddled the earth around another bunch of forget-me-nots.

"Sumtoimes," said he, slowly, "I've

not been sorry God tuk her. She wor an angel whin she left me; and had she lived to grow up, she might 'a' tuk to atein' loike her mother."



*A RIGHTEOUS
SLAUGHTER*

V



I

F I were a Buddhist, I wonder what would become of Tom Norton's rose bed? The rivalry of Buddha and the rose!

I know: in such a case, all of those poor green insects would be left to live—to thrive upon rose leaves, while the poor Buddhist must gaze upon mere skeletons of bushes and still thank Allah.

However, being but a hardened barbarian of a western world, I have

been very busy mixing poisons, guaranteed to kill. Pat and I have spent hours in what I call, "righteous slaughter."

Behold the result: Mr. Norton's despised rose bushes are looking green and vigorous; they are putting forth a multitude of buds that delight my very heart.

This garden would be a good field for a naturalist. The variety of bugs is endless. What use they form in creation puzzles me, unless it is to distract the heart of a gardener. Perhaps, if there were no bugs, gardens would all become earthly paradises, and the people that dwell in them would never sigh for heaven.

As it is, to be a good gardener, one must have an eye out for bugs, — bugs

that work while you sleep; bugs that never tire. To be as healthy as a bug, means something; for, according to my observation, bugs and weeds are the healthiest things in existence.

The other day, as I was passing a hedge of vigorous golden glows, I noticed the stems covered with what looked like red thorns.

"Thorns, on the glows!" I exclaimed.

Pat was wiser; he looked more closely, and said in a disgusted tone:—

"Begorra, them's bugs!"

"Oh no," I wailed.

"Yes, bugs, ivery one — rid divils!"

"Run for the poison, Pat," I cried, "while I hunt for the syringe."

When we had finished, the ground

was literally red from slaughter. Oh, why must this be?

"I hate bugs," said Pat. "'Tis the divil's own work, the makin' o' 'em."

"God made everything," I said solemnly.

"Whoo!" cried Pat. "Ye'd niver ketch the A'mighty a-thriflin' wid bugs; 'tis the divil himself what makes 'em. Shure, that ould spalpeen is so put out at seein' the flowers grow strong an' purty, that he's whottled round and invinted bugs to clinch 'em.

"I remimbers," he continued, "whin I was small, I once visited me uncle. He wor a gardener at a juke's place, near Dublin. Begorra, but that wor a foine place!—the juke's summer home. The garden was full of stattys,

that looked live enuf to talk, and the flowers were jest illigant! You cu'd pick a bushel o' roses, an' niver miss 'em.

"One mornin' the jukess came to whalk in the garden. I remimber her as if 'twor yisterday. She was big and fat from good livin'. Shure, she'd fotched her weight up to two hundred pounds or more. Her face was as red as a piny, and she wore a frock that was a caution—'twor satin, all imbroidered over wid lilies. Wall, as she wor a-whalkin' along, me uncle stepped out from behint a statty, an' ses he, bowin' low:—

"'Good-mornin', yer highness'; then he hild out to her a bokay of illigant flowers.

"She tuk 'em, haughty loike; an'

jest as she wor a-shmellin' o' 'em, be-dad! if the gran'est worm, a full inch long, didn't crawl out o' thim flowers on to the royal nose.

"She let out a shrake that lifted the hair o' me. 'Wow! wow!' ses she; thin she threw thim flowers and fell down on the garden whalk in a shwoon.

"Shure, that dommed worm cost me uncle his place. The jukess could niver look at him agin widout thinkin' o' it, and a-turnin' faint, so she plead with the juke to turn me uncle off."

"She wasn't much of a woman!" I said indignantly.

"Shure, that's the way wid the quality, mum. Me uncle had a wife and tin childers, but she niver thought o'

thot. Next year he hired out to a lord; and shure, when the lordess cum out to whalk, me uncle continted himself wid bowin' an' wishin' her the top o' the mornin'."

"Was it with your uncle that you first learned to garden, Pat?"

"It wor. Me uncle tuk a shine to me. Ses he, 'Pat, thar's good shtuff in ye; for I see ye love flowers.' His own childers, ivery one o' 'em, wor set against gardenin'. Shure, they hated it; and I think 'twas this broke me uncle's heart. He died young."

"What age was he, Pat?"

"Jist turned fifty, whin a sunshstroke tuk him off, suddent."

Pat's face was very grave as he picked up the poison and walked away.

I was not at all cast down. A sort of triumph filled me as I looked at the ground, strewn with slaughtered insects, and then at the sturdy golden glows, rid of their dreadful pest. Now they could grow and be beautiful; and their sunny blooms should be their "Thank you," to me.

I sauntered along the garden path until I came to the sweet peas. How fresh and hardy these little green vines always looked, springing up from the brown earth, clinging to the wire trellis, and ever climbing to reach a soft blue ocean of air, where they might unfurl their tinted silken sails.

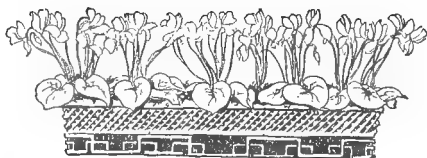
Could it be that something ailed my sweet peas? Some of their crisp leaves were turning a dingy

brown; and there was a sickly look over all.

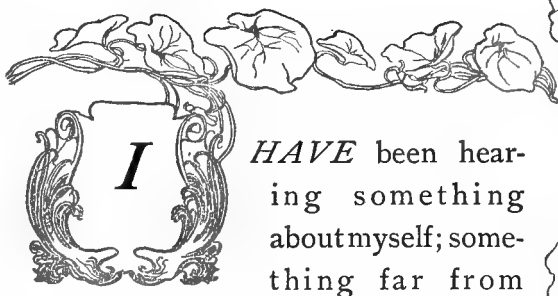
I hurriedly knelt among them, and peering up under the vines, beheld a whole regiment of the green aphides, hard at work.

For the next two hours Pat and I attended strictly to business; even Rhoda was beguiled into carrying pails of soap-suds, with which to drench the vines.

"Bress yer heart, honey," she said, scornfully. "We never had nun ob dem bugs in old Varginny."



*I AM
TALKED VI
ABOUT*



I HAVE been hearing something about myself; something far from agreeable. It happened in this way,—where the brook steals in at my garden, there is a little spring, a tiny natural basin as clear as a mirror. All around this little pool I have decided to plant daffodils, — shining, yellow daffodils, that the poet tells us: —

“Come before the swallow dares, and take
the winds of March with beauty.”

I have often dreamed of their loveliness, walling in a colony of blue violets; for violets haunt these mossy banks. They come early in the spring and linger all summer.

It must have been in just such a clear little pool that Narcissus bent to peep. I recalled a couplet:—

“In the spring all violet-edged,
In the spring by tall ferns hedged.”

Ah! I lacked the ferns; but this could be easily remedied. That very afternoon, I took a basket and trowel, and rowing across the lake, entered a wood where ferns grow in great luxuriance. In a mossy hollow, behind a great boulder, I began to dig.

I soon became aware that I was not alone. I heard voices, and looking up, beheld, just seating them-



"OH, YES," SAID ONE, "I KNOW MAX ELLIOT,
WE WERE SCHOOL MATES!"

selves upon the boulder, backs toward me, two females. (I call them females out of pure spite.)

Their conversation attracted me.

"Oh, yes," said one, "I know Max Elliot. We were schoolmates. He married a very singular woman — poor man!"

Now who likes being called, "a very singular woman," and your husband, "poor man"?

"So the marriage is unhappy?" said the other.

"Well, not exactly; I hear he puts up with her. It must try him; but he is a man that never acknowledges a mistake."

"What sort of a woman is she?"

"Oh, I can't describe her. She isn't homely; but she hasn't a bit of style,

and there is a far-away look in her eyes, as if she weren't all there. I call her one of those head-in-the-clouds women. You know what they are?"

"Yes, indeed!" and the tone expressed volumes.

"She's not in the least domestic," continued the first woman. "Why, I have a cook that once worked for her. She says Mrs. Elliot wouldn't even take the trouble to think what they should have to eat. Poor Mary Ellen did it all."

"Shall we call on her?" asked the second woman.

"I hardly know. The chances are we wouldn't find her at home. She is always gadding through the woods, or tending the garden. I hear she digs and plants just like a man."

"Shocking!"

"You may well say it; and she such a little thing—as slender as a child! I may call on her about rose-time, for I hear she is very generous with her flowers."

"Oh," I thought, "*you* will find her particularly stingy."

I picked up the empty basket, and stole back to the boat; I had lost my zest for digging ferns. Somehow it always saddens me to think people dislike me. The tears were in my eyes; but once out on the wide, sunny lake, a gentle wind came and dried them. I forgot my sorrow; for suddenly a great sense of protecting love seemed about me. I felt guarded, as it were, by angels. I knew that all the time I had

lived among my flowers, in the beautiful out-doors, I had remembered the proverb:—

“He that keepeth his tongue from evil, keepeth his soul from trouble.”

I had no trouble; it melted away from me as easily as the mist before the sun. Perhaps, for the first time in my life, I realised that I was wise; wise to love God-made things before man-made things; for, surely, it is man-made things that render us so wretched, and the God-made things that so uplift and exalt us.

A little farther down the lake I moored my boat and stepped ashore. The maple grove seemed beckoning me. “Come,” said the gentle beneficent trees, “and stroll in our quiet aisles—rest a little.” If tired women

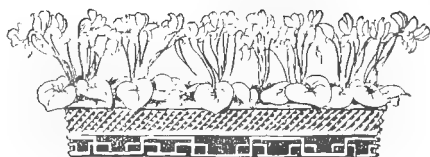
only knew how much the woods have to give them!

I found a mossy throne on the roots of an upturned tree, and there I sat, watching the declining sun send little rays among the lacy ferns, till they glowed like golden arrows. Oh, the tenderness of sunbeams in the wood! The soft touching of the giant boles of trees; the flickering on the moss, and the sudden lighting of some wilding flower; the vague gyrating tracery on the fallen leaves in the runlet; and the gleaming golden vistas of distant aisles! There was so much to see, so much to be happy over, that I was rather startled when I discovered another appreciative being near me.

It was a brown thrush, with a soul

full of joy. He had burst into song. I listened until he finished, then I searched for him among the tall trees; some green leaf hid him. He was an invisible soloist, but his melody had thrilled the sunlit aisles and made them holy.

“Little brown thrush,” I said, aloud; “you trust your Creator, while I only try to; I must do better.” Then I turned my face to the west, and standing, wrapped in the glory of the departing day, I thanked God that he had fashioned me — “a head-in-the-clouds woman.”



THE
BITTERN'S NEST VII



I

KNOW a bank where the
wild thyme blows."

Not exactly that,
but a bank where
violets grow. "Pat," I said, as my
faithful henchman stood before me,
awaiting the next day's orders, "could
you rise very early to-morrow morn-
ing and row me up the lake?"

"I naden't go to bed a-tall, mum,"
said Pat.

"Oh, I don't mean so early as that!
Say about five o'clock. A boy told

me last night, that there is a least bittern's nest in the marsh over in the south cove, and I want to see it."

"Shure, I know them burds," said Pat; "they're accy bats."

"What do you mean?"

"Bedad, the cute divils whalk on stilts. Did ye niver see 'em wadin' thru' the rooshes? 'Tis a caution! I'll be on hand, mum," and Pat sloped away, whistling "Derry Down."

That evening I told Max of my contemplated trip.

"Count me out," he said lazily.

"As if I ever counted you in!" I protested. "Now tell me truly, Max, did you ever see the sun rise?"

"How does it look?" he inquired evasively.

"Oh," I said, "it is as if some one came out and said — hush!"

"That's proper," returned Max; "I am always hushed."

"And then," I continued — but Max looked quizzical. What use to waste rapture on him? I slipped out of the room and down into the kitchen.

"Rhoda," I said, "will you set out a cold bite for me? I am going up the lake very early in the morning."

"How early, honey?"

"Well, I intend to leave here by five o'clock."

"I'll have you a warm breakfus, honey."

"No, Rhoda; you need not rise so early."

"'Deed I will, honey. You'se jes' like my chile to me. All my own

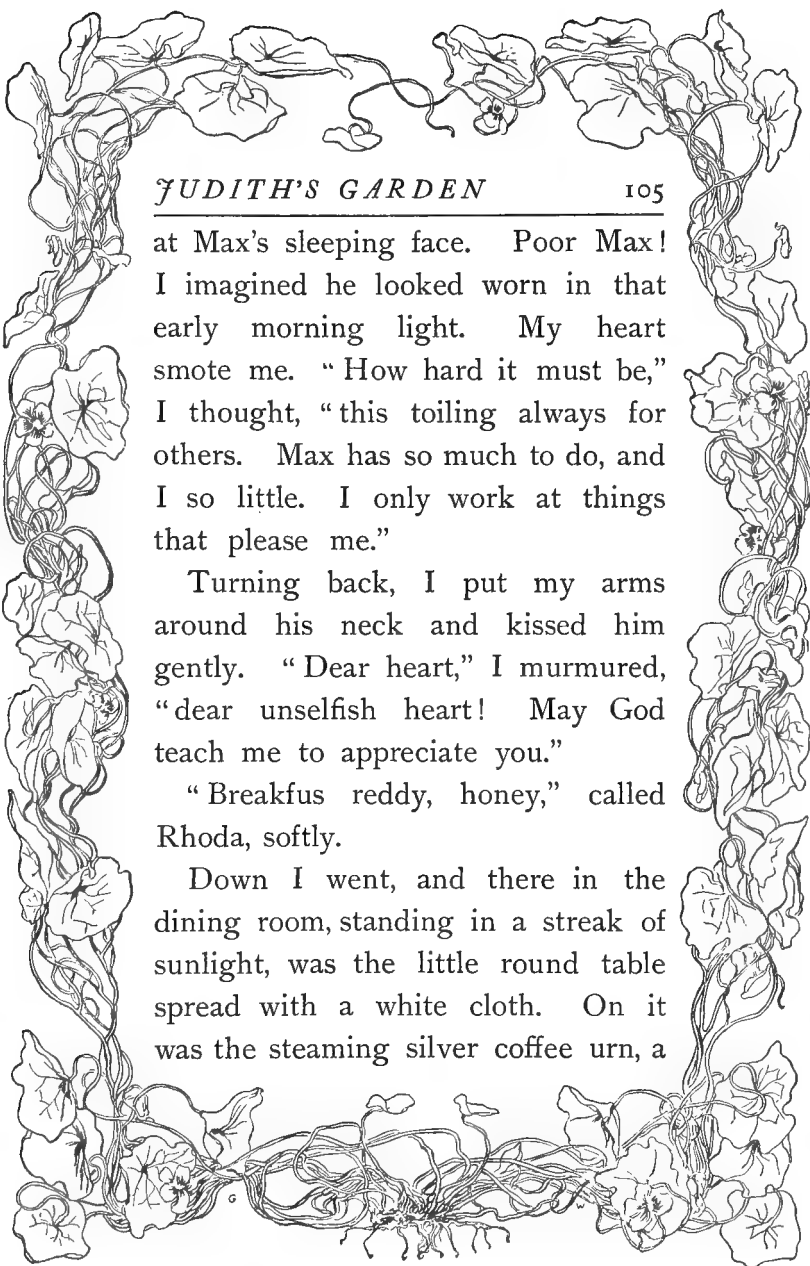
chillun—dead long ago; and Jim tuk, too. Dar ain't no one to love but you, honey. You'se jes' like my chile to me."

"Oh, Rhoda," I said, and I put my arms around her faithful old form and pillowed my head on her ample breast. "You're just like a mammy to me."

Before I slept that night, I thought of Mary Ellen and compared her with Rhoda. The difference was, Rhoda was *my* slave, while *I* was Mary Ellen's. How I enjoyed the change!

I waked next morning at four o'clock. The sun was already up and birds were carolling round my window.

I dressed quickly—glancing once



at Max's sleeping face. Poor Max! I imagined he looked worn in that early morning light. My heart smote me. "How hard it must be," I thought, "this toiling always for others. Max has so much to do, and I so little. I only work at things that please me."

Turning back, I put my arms around his neck and kissed him gently. "Dear heart," I murmured, "dear unselfish heart! May God teach me to appreciate you."

"Breakfus reddy, honey," called Rhoda, softly.

Down I went, and there in the dining room, standing in a streak of sunlight, was the little round table spread with a white cloth. On it was the steaming silver coffee urn, a

plate piled with golden slabs of hot corn-pone, a dish of dewy strawberries, and an exquisite la France rose — the first from the garden.

“Set right down, honey, while I fetch yo’ a bit o’ briled steak an’ a ’tato.”

I was not slow to obey. Such a cook is Rhoda! I ate with a relish what she brought me and drank the fragrant coffee; then I looked at the strawberries.

“I jes’ searched de patch for ’em, honey. Dey’s mighty scource yit.”

“Rhoda,” I said gently, “would you mind if I saved them for Mr. Elliot? He looks very tired this morning. I know he would enjoy them.”

Rhoda’s face fell. “Dey’s for you, honey; men folks ain’t no ’count.”

"Just to please me, Rhoda," I coaxed. "See, I will eat one. Now set them by his plate, and, Rhoda, put the rose in water to keep for him. Say I left it with my love."

"Jes' you say, honey; but I'se mighty dispinted."

She looked so, as she stood in the doorway, her red turbaned head bobbing me a good-by.

I found Pat waiting in the boat.

"The top o' the mornin' to ye, missus," he cried. "'Tis a purty day I'm expectin'."

He made me very comfortable, then rowed vigorously toward the lake.

I believe it pays to rise early, not only to catch the rare beauty of the morning, but for the sense of exhila-

ration which permeates one's whole body. I could scarcely believe that three short months ago I had been but a weak, despondent mortal—courting death rather than life. Now I felt like a modern Amazon. What couldn't I do? Suddenly our boat shot past the clump of overhanging birches out into the lake.

It seemed to me that I had never beheld anything so beautiful as this wide expanse of water, rippling in the freshness of morn. A sort of roseate haze hung round its banks, like dim curtains, shutting out the forest; yet ever now and then shifting, in vague uncertainty. As the sun rose higher, dainty little wavelets leaped to catch his rays, and the whole lake flashed like a jewel. Over our heads flew a

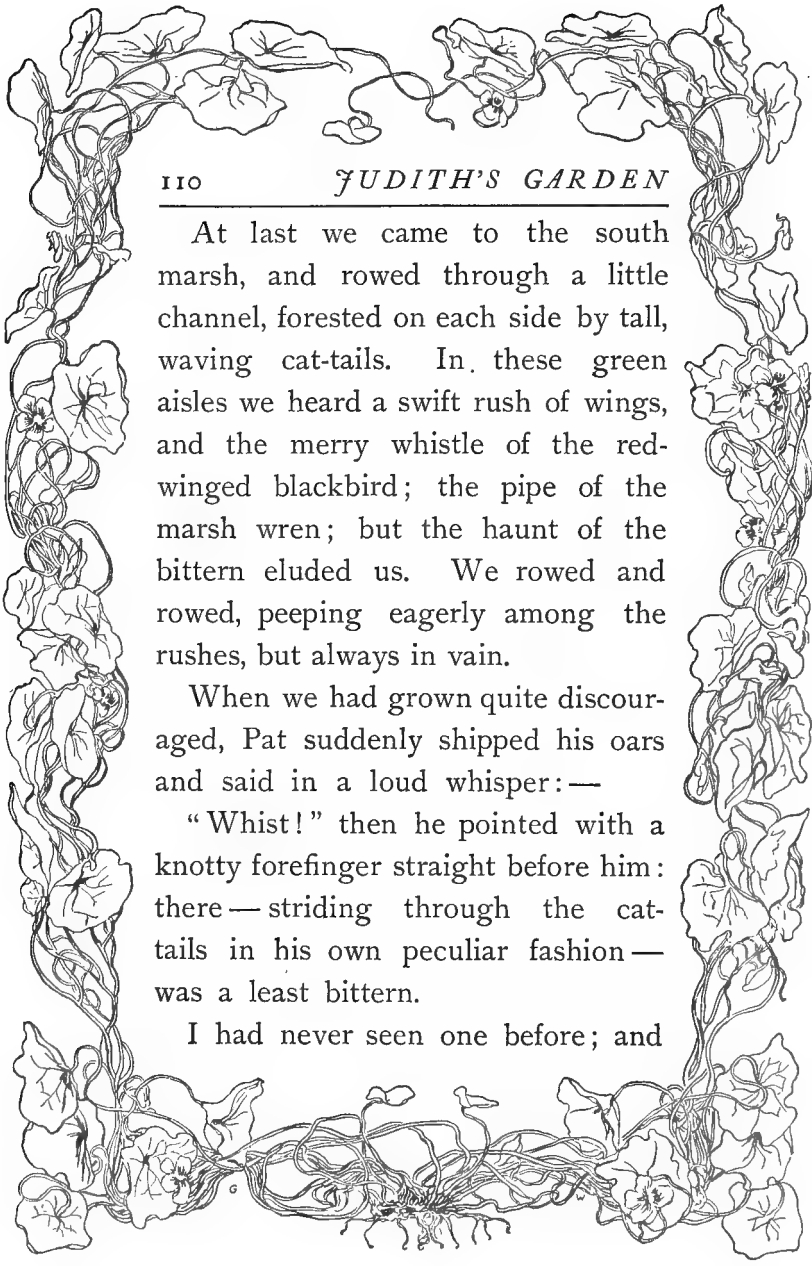
flock of crows, cawing lustily; and presently we heard the loud mocking laugh of a loon.

It was too hazy, near the edge of the lake, to catch sight of the loon, but again and again his laugh broke the stillness. Pat rowed vigorously in that direction.

"If we could only see him!" I cried.

"He's a shly burd," said Pat. "Shure 'tis mony the toime I've struve to fotch on him; but, bedad, he's that cute, he'll shwim under wather to fool ye."

So it was. When we drew near the spot where we had heard him, the laugh sounded far in the distance — like some luring *ignis fatuus*; and we were fain to desist following it.



At last we came to the south marsh, and rowed through a little channel, forested on each side by tall, waving cat-tails. In these green aisles we heard a swift rush of wings, and the merry whistle of the red-winged blackbird; the pipe of the marsh wren; but the haunt of the bittern eluded us. We rowed and rowed, peeping eagerly among the rushes, but always in vain.

When we had grown quite discouraged, Pat suddenly shipped his oars and said in a loud whisper:—

“Whist!” then he pointed with a knotty forefinger straight before him: there—striding through the cat-tails in his own peculiar fashion—was a least bittern.

I had never seen one before; and

it took me several moments to comprehend that this queer bird was not wading through the water, but only stepping, agilely, from one rush to another.

"Shure, we'll find the nesht now," whispered Pat.

He was right. In a few moments we spied it. On it, like a sphinx carved in stone, sat the mother bird, her head drawn back in an unnatural attitude, seeking, in a bittern's queer way, to become invisible to her foe.

"If we could only see the eggs!" I whispered.

"Shoo thar!" cried Pat, striking the water violently with an oar.

This unhallowed racket was too much for my lady; with a startled flutter she slipped from the nest and

waded quickly through the rushes toward her mate.

After we had examined carefully the nest with its four white eggs, touching not, Pat backed the boat away, and we left the frightened mother to peace and solitude.

Instead of going directly home, we rowed to a mossy bank, where, Pat said, violets grew.

And indeed they did. From the moist soil rose hundreds of blue-capped heads. With a little cry of delight, I fell to picking them; and down on his knees went Pat at the same task.

When I considered I had gathered quite a bunch, I turned and saw that my companion had a still larger one. I expected he would bestow them

upon me, but he did not; instead, he took a bit of twine from his pocket and gravely tied their stems.

"Thim's moine," he said. "Shall I tie yer's, missus?"

I consented. As we rowed homeward I said, "Your wife will be pleased with the violets, Pat."

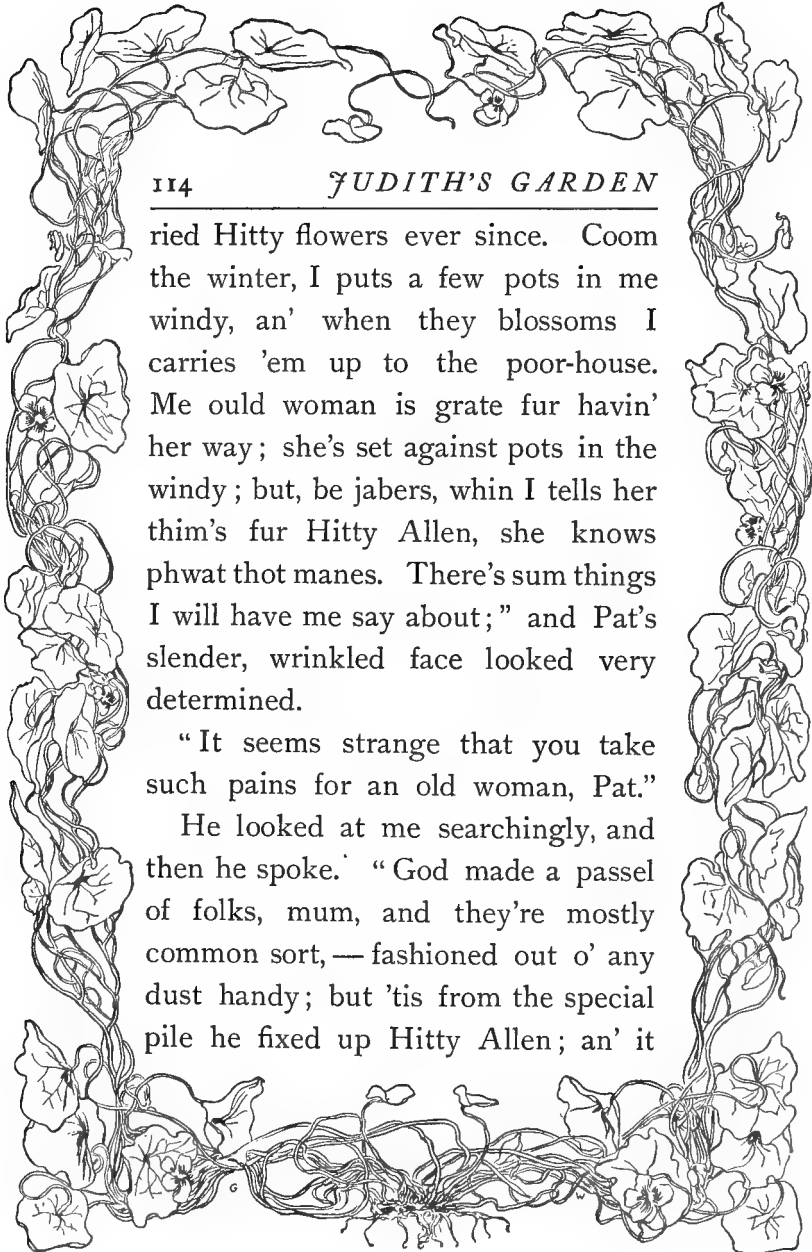
"Hoo!" he exclaimed, "did yese think I was pickin' 'em fur Bridget? 'Tis vigitables I'd tak' her."

He must have interpreted my curiosity.

"Thim vilets," he said, looking a little foolish, "air fur Hitty Allen, phwat resides in the poor-house."

"She who loved orchids?"

"Yes, mum; the orchards thot pined on their shticks an' died! That's tin years back; but, begorra, I've car-



ried Hitty flowers ever since. Coom the winter, I puts a few pots in me windy, an' when they blossoms I carries 'em up to the poor-house. Me ould woman is grate fur havin' her way; she's set against pots in the windy; but, be jabbers, whin I tells her thim's fur Hitty Allen, she knows phwat thot manes. There's sum things I will have me say about;" and Pat's slender, wrinkled face looked very determined.

"It seems strange that you take such pains for an old woman, Pat."

He looked at me searchingly, and then he spoke. "God made a passel of folks, mum, and they're mostly common sort,—fashioned out o' any dust handy; but 'tis from the special pile he fixed up Hitty Allen; an' it

makes no difference where she shtops, in a phallis or in a poor-house, she's coom from that special pile, an' God's set His seal upon her. He'll know her."

"I think, Pat," I said, looking at the old man, "you, too, were made out of that special pile."

"Hoo!" cried Pat, "an' 'tis *me* ye mane? Shure, God took any ould scrapin's to make an Irishman; an' He picked out a face fur him as homely as a goat's."

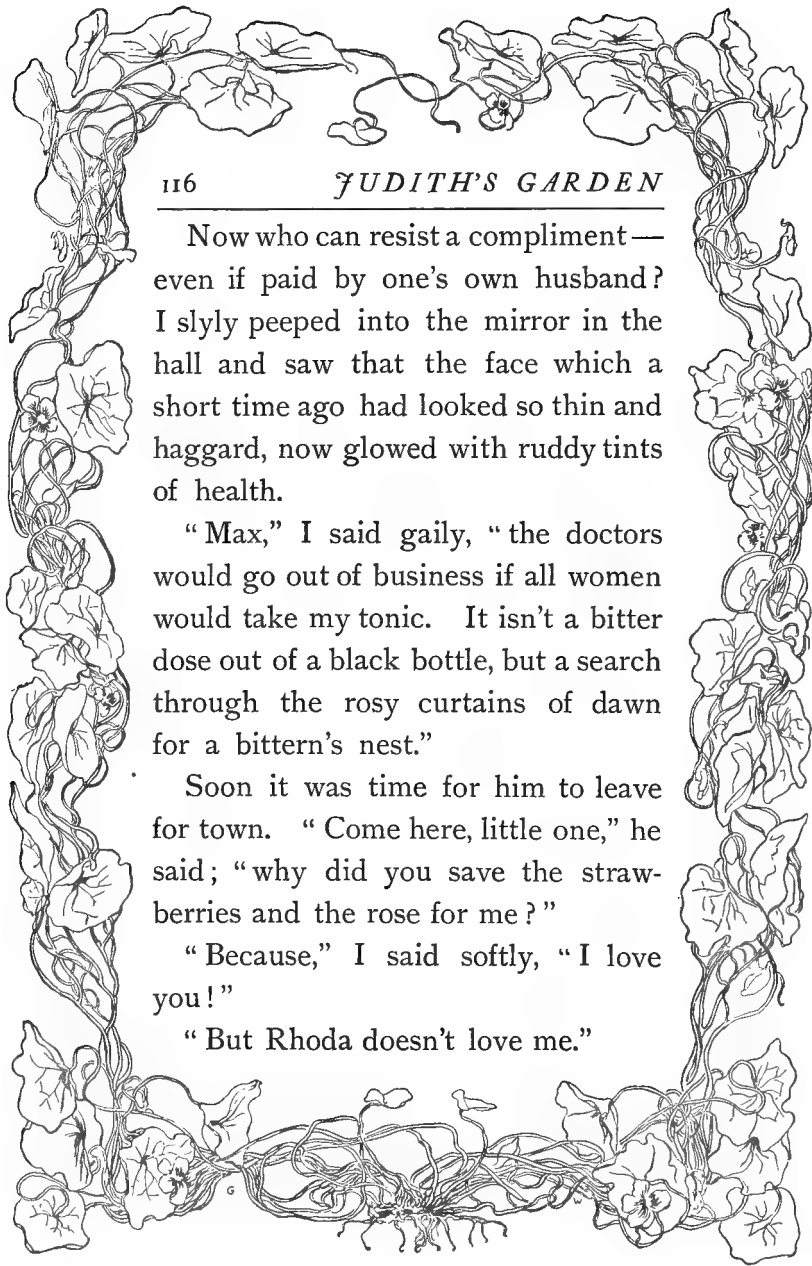
"No," I said softly, "He didn't. Some have souls that shine right through their faces."

When we arrived home, Max was sitting upon the piazza.

"Good-morning, Aurora," he said.

"Why Aurora?" I asked.

"Was she not all pink and white?"



Now who can resist a compliment — even if paid by one's own husband? I slyly peeped into the mirror in the hall and saw that the face which a short time ago had looked so thin and haggard, now glowed with ruddy tints of health.

"Max," I said gaily, "the doctors would go out of business if all women would take my tonic. It isn't a bitter dose out of a black bottle, but a search through the rosy curtains of dawn for a bittern's nest."

Soon it was time for him to leave for town. "Come here, little one," he said; "why did you save the strawberries and the rose for me?"

"Because," I said softly, "I love you!"

"But Rhoda doesn't love me."

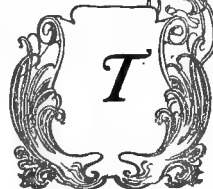
"Why?"

"She divided those strawberries,
giving me the smaller half; and she
said the rose was only to look at."



*I CLAIM
A
FEW THINGS*

VIII

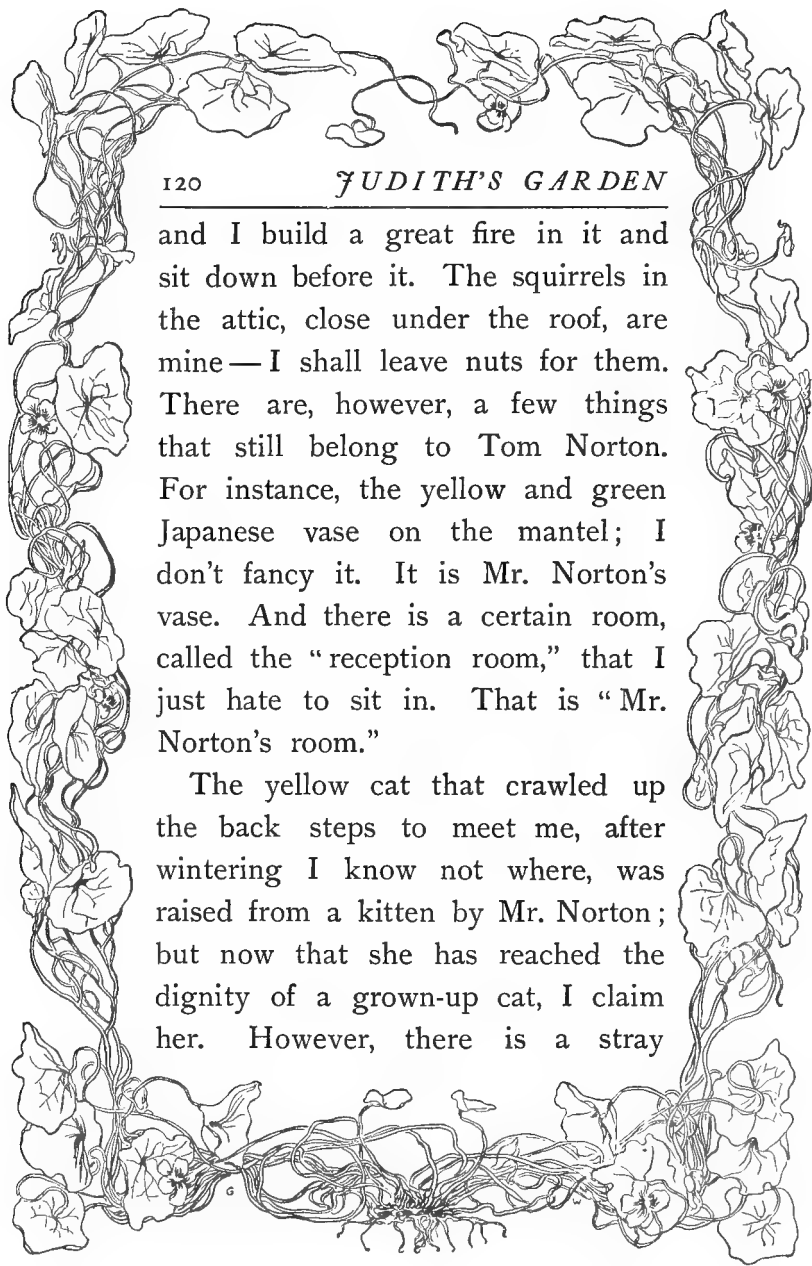


HE roses are all
in blossom, and I
am secretly glad
that Mr. Tom
Norton is safe in Europe, lest he
should behold the success of my
efforts and want his garden back
again.

Back again! somehow in these
few short months it has grown to
be my garden—my paradise. The
brook is mine and the grove is mine.
Already I have built airy castles as

to how everything will look next year. I see in fancy the daffodils crowding round the spring, and the pale fronds of ferns uncurling in the pleasant air. Blooming along the brookside, later on, the iris will reflect in wavering hues its blue and lavender, its yellow and pink, in the clear water. How very gay that little stream will look!

All the birds in the grove are mine. The thrushes that sing so sweetly at eventide, and the meadow lark that whirs up from the clover field; the "Bob White" that perches on the fence to call, "More wet!" the robin and the yellow warbler swinging on the thistle tops,—all are mine! The fireplace in the house is mine; for on chilly evenings Max



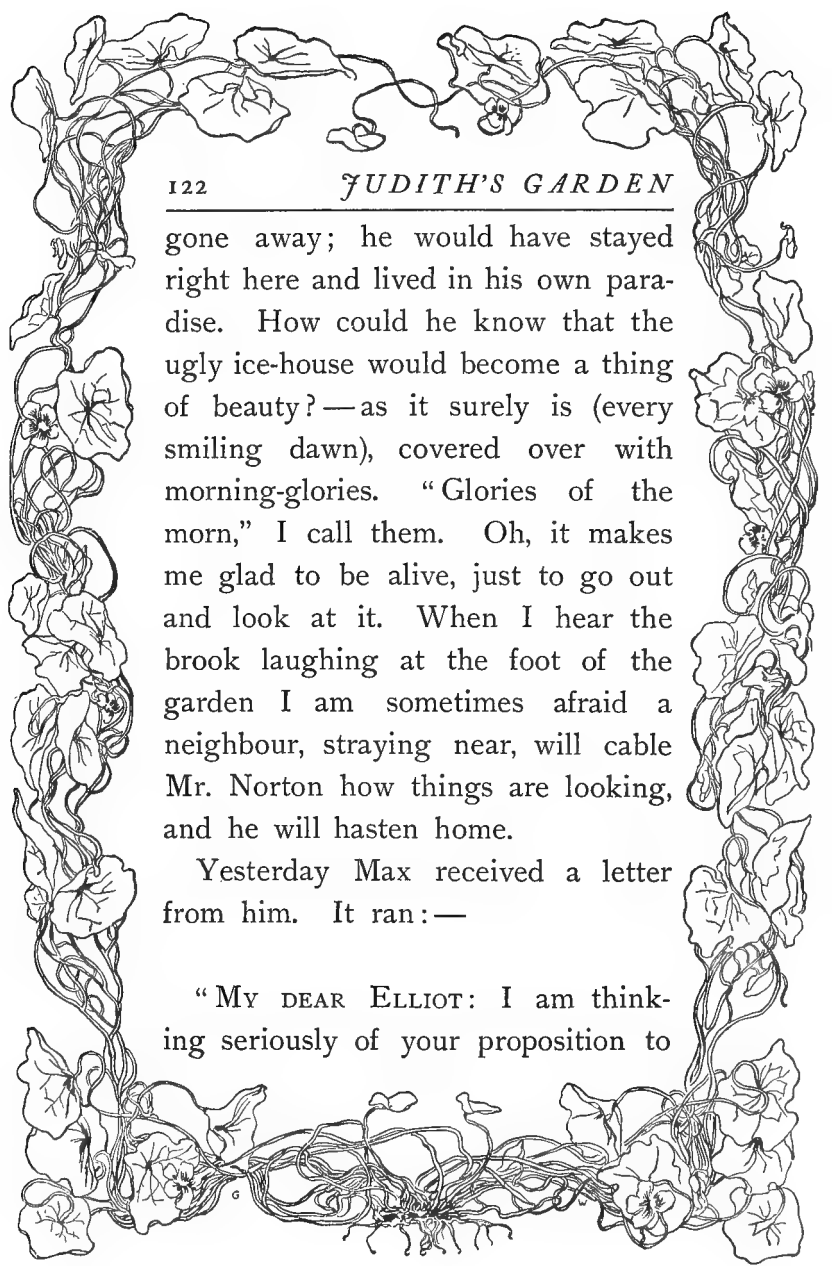
and I build a great fire in it and sit down before it. The squirrels in the attic, close under the roof, are mine—I shall leave nuts for them. There are, however, a few things that still belong to Tom Norton. For instance, the yellow and green Japanese vase on the mantel; I don't fancy it. It is Mr. Norton's vase. And there is a certain room, called the "reception room," that I just hate to sit in. That is "Mr. Norton's room."

The yellow cat that crawled up the back steps to meet me, after wintering I know not where, was raised from a kitten by Mr. Norton; but now that she has reached the dignity of a grown-up cat, I claim her. However, there is a stray

rooster around here (he looks like the last scion of some game fowls) that I lay no claim to. He is a hardy, pestiferous creature; and the way he scratches through my flower-beds is discouraging. I call him, "Mr. Norton's rooster."

Somebody told me that Mr. Norton went abroad for his health. Now I don't wish anything wicked, but wouldn't it be nice if Mr. Norton didn't improve quite as fast as he expected to?—not to grow much worse, but just a little worse; so that he would not return to this country for a long time, to claim his own.

Of course, had he guessed that his garden, when properly cultivated, would fall but a trifle short of the Garden of Eden, he would not have



gone away; he would have stayed right here and lived in his own paradise. How could he know that the ugly ice-house would become a thing of beauty?—as it surely is (every smiling dawn), covered over with morning-glories. “Glories of the morn,” I call them. Oh, it makes me glad to be alive, just to go out and look at it. When I hear the brook laughing at the foot of the garden I am sometimes afraid a neighbour, straying near, will cable Mr. Norton how things are looking, and he will hasten home.

Yesterday Max received a letter from him. It ran:—

“MY DEAR ELLIOT: I am thinking seriously of your proposition to

buy the place, but as yet, have not decided to sell. I used to think I should like to spend my days there, and have a garden — such as we read about; but alas! I soon discovered that that particular spot of earth had too many other tenants to make it comfortable for the growth of flowers.

“I think the first year I moved there I planted a hundred rose-bushes, and the next year fifty; but I never had any roses.

“An insect, dressed in green, made it too lively for those poor bushes. In a short time they were stripped of their leaves, and being naked, refused to bloom.

“I often think of your wife pottering among the flowers (I know how she loves them); and I picture her

dismay whenever she makes a new acquaintance from the land of bugdom.

"On this side of the globe flowers do grow. I wish I could show Mrs. Elliot a certain hedge of roses in bloom just across the road from our hotel. It is one perfect mass of glorious flowers.

"My health is somewhat improved, but I do not feel my old self yet. I shall not return home until I am quite recovered. I will let you know later about the place.

"With kindest regard to Mrs. Elliot and yourself, I am,

"Yours sincerely,
"T. B. NORTON."

So we could not tell the outcome; but I kept right on claiming things.

*MY FIRST
GLIMPSE OF IX
PRISCILLA*



I *HAVE* been with
Pat to the poor-
house to pay a visit
to Hetty Allen.

Taking life as serenely as I do, and developing such a passion for getting rid of my money, I have felt (as you know) some curiosity concerning a poor-house. I determined to find out if it were really a place so greatly to be avoided.

We rowed to the north end of

the lake, then walked across the fields.

Our way led us through the domain of Mr. Electrical Brown. He is called "Electrical," I hear, out of compliment to his inventions. We saw the gardens that had once been Hetty Allen's, and the low white farmhouse in the distance.

Almost as eccentric a character owned them now; in truth, it seemed the home of eccentricity. The whole neighbourhood was rife with stories concerning the odd things invented by Mr. Electrical Brown. His beautiful daughter, Priscilla, was an object of the greatest curiosity. Her dead mother had been an actress, and Miss Priscilla Brown, it was said, was wearing out a wardrobe left to her

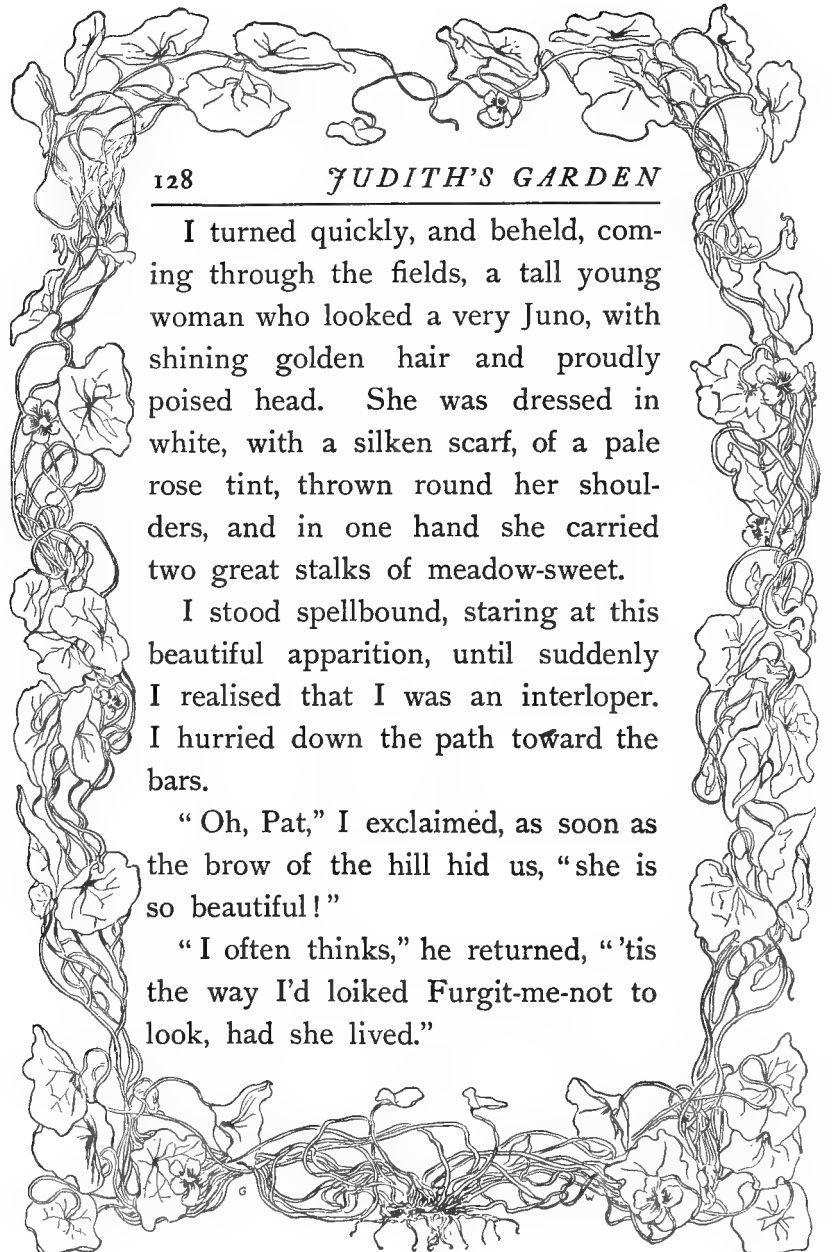
by that talented parent. The quaint old silks and grotesque jewelry belonged to costumes of the middle centuries.

Then the queer old servant that lived with them, Belinda, was given to fits and the most violent exhibitions of wrath; but she guarded her master and mistress with a faithfulness worthy of an angel.

"'Twor yender," said Pat, pointing with his knotty forefinger, "that the limb o' Satan fell into a fit; an' roond that medder I chased the hin. A tuff old spalpeen she was! Must 'a' tuk a power o' bilin' to tender her. Whist! there she is—"

"The hen?"

"No — beggin' yer pardon — 'tis Miss Priscilly."



I turned quickly, and beheld, coming through the fields, a tall young woman who looked a very Juno, with shining golden hair and proudly poised head. She was dressed in white, with a silken scarf, of a pale rose tint, thrown round her shoulders, and in one hand she carried two great stalks of meadow-sweet.

I stood spellbound, staring at this beautiful apparition, until suddenly I realised that I was an interloper. I hurried down the path toward the bars.

"Oh, Pat," I exclaimed, as soon as the brow of the hill hid us, "she is so beautiful!"

"I often thinks," he returned, "'tis the way I'd loiked Furgit-me-not to look, had she lived."

We walked in silence through a long lane bordered on each side by tall elderberry bushes just whitening into bloom. Where the bars opened beyond, a wild rose thrust its spicy face into notice, and its faint pink petals reminded me of Priscilla's scarf.

We found Hetty Allen in the meadow back of the poor-house. (I was glad to note there was a meadow.) A bent, white-faced, dreamy old woman, sitting amid the clover, her hands full of blooms. Her mind seemed quite gone.

"God bless ye, Miss Allen!" said Pat.

"The same to you, kindly sir," she returned. She took the roses he offered her and kissed them; then

her eyes wandered to me. "What have we here," she asked, "an orchid?"

"'Tis me missus, as has coom to see ye," explained Pat.

"No," she said dreamily, "'tis an orchid; frail but splendid, and very expensive. I must have it, if it costs me the south pasture."

"No, no," cried Pat, a little impatiently, fearing, perhaps, that I might be offended, "'tis no orchard a-tall a-tall! 'Tis me missus."

"I see," she said sweetly, "and I recognise the species; very rare, very rare!"

Poor Pat looked crestfallen. "She's daft," he whispered. "I hope ye'll not moind being tuk fur one o' thim orchards what pined on their shticks."

"I'm not offended," I replied gently; "and since she takes me for a flower, I'd as soon be an orchid as anything else."

We left her, after a while, and I peeped in at the poor-house door. It looked quite clean and neat.

Just inside sat an old woman peeling potatoes.

"My God," she screamed, "here's my Mary Ann!" In an instant the potatoes were rolling about the floor, and I was being embraced in the most effusive manner.

She smelled strongly of tobacco, and I struggled to free myself.

Pat laid hold of her shoulder and jerked her about.

She looked aggrieved. Just then the matron arrived.

"The tiresome old creature," she said, boxing her soundly on the ear, "always seeing her Mary Ann!"

"Don't," I said, "don't!" then I bent to help the poor old thing pick up the potatoes, as she searched for them with vague, trembling fingers.

Somehow this scene tore down my air-castle of a poor-house. Ear-boxing, I feared, was the fashion at this abode. Oh, how cold is charity!

The matron politely showed me over the house; but my ardour had cooled. I glanced into the bare little rooms and shuddered. Every one of them seemed to hold skeletons of lost joys and present sorrows.

The matron kept up a constant grumbling over her arduous duties

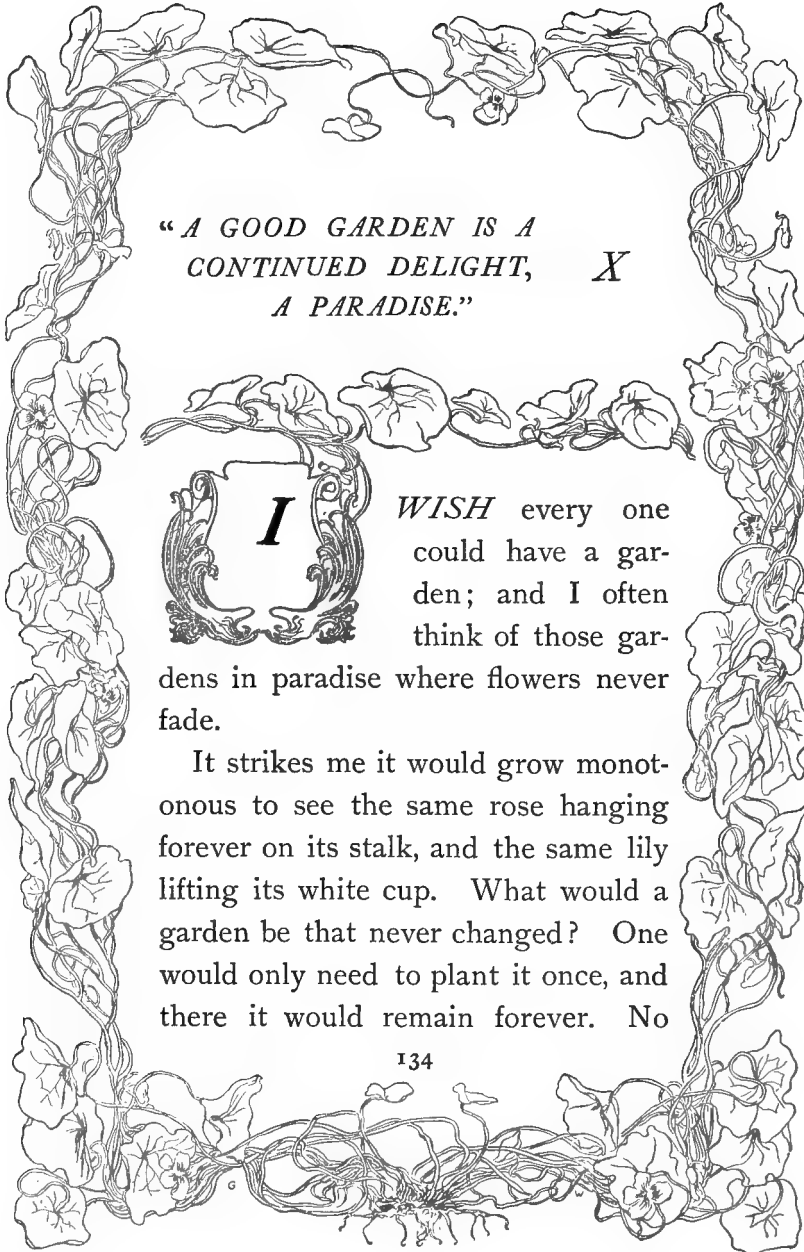
and the inconveniences she was subjected to.

“How many inmates have you?” I inquired.

“Thirty,” she replied crossly; “and I wish they were all in heaven! tiresome, tormenting old creatures, stubborn girls, and sottish men.”

“No doubt they echo that wish,” I said severely; “I should, if I lived here.”

I have made up my mind to try to save my money, and to keep clear of the poor-house. I only fear the florists, and the agents who peddle shrubs. They are so polite to me, so anxious to sell me things, that—well, how can I help but buy?



*"A GOOD GARDEN IS A
CONTINUED DELIGHT, X
A PARADISE."*

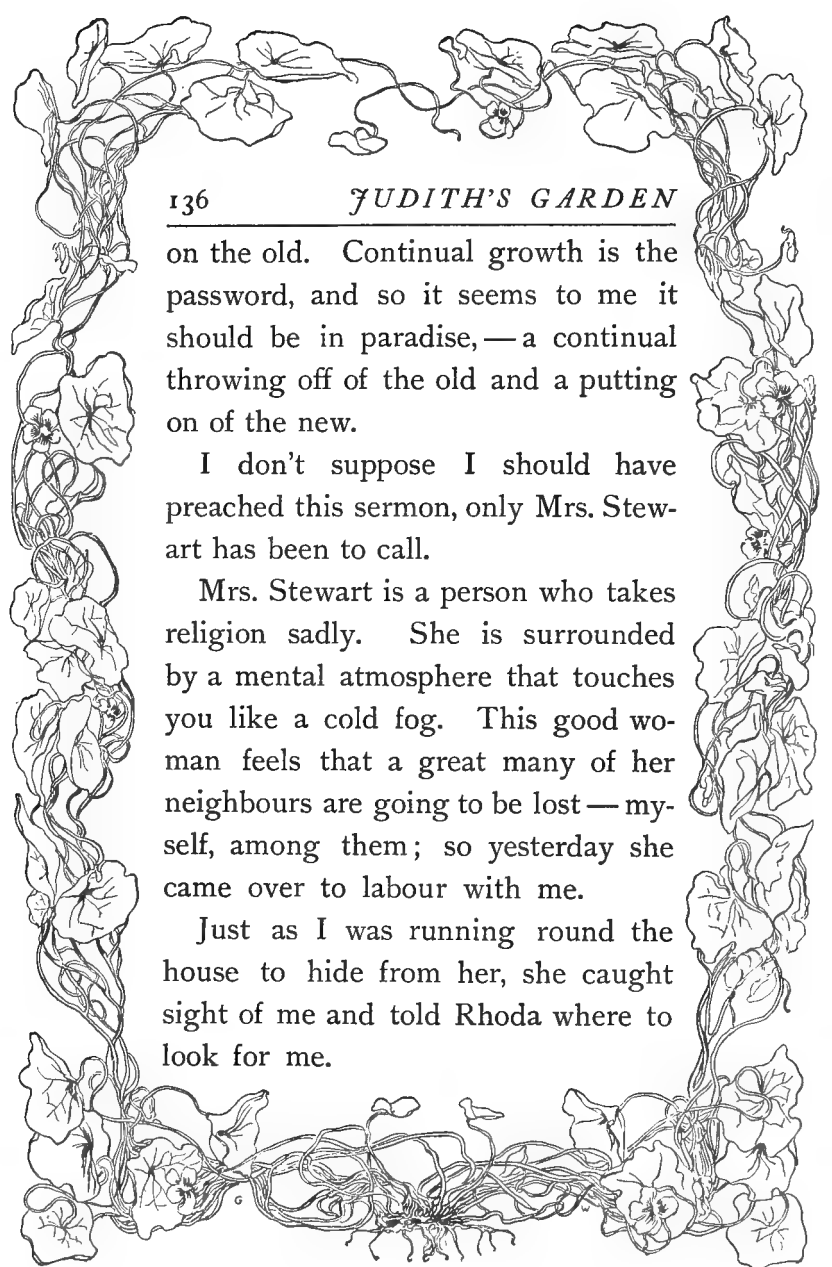


I *WISH* every one
could have a gar-
den; and I often
think of those gar-
dens in paradise where flowers never
fade.

It strikes me it would grow monotonous to see the same rose hanging forever on its stalk, and the same lily lifting its white cup. What would a garden be that never changed? One would only need to plant it once, and there it would remain forever. No

little flutters of anxiety as to seeds coming up; for, of course, in paradise, every seed would come up. No danger of buds blasting, for every bud would fulfil its mission and burst into full flower. For a month or two I think I might enjoy paradise; and then—well, I do not wish to shock people, but I believe that I should fly into ten thousand pieces if something didn't happen. No; give me this dear old earth, full of cares and anxieties and bugs. It is hard to make a garden grow here; but when it does grow, you know it is the result of honest toil and careful watching.

It spices one's days to overcome difficulties. Here, when a flower fades, another springs up to take its place and, like a new thought, crowds



on the old. Continual growth is the password, and so it seems to me it should be in paradise,—a continual throwing off of the old and a putting on of the new.

I don't suppose I should have preached this sermon, only Mrs. Stewart has been to call.

Mrs. Stewart is a person who takes religion sadly. She is surrounded by a mental atmosphere that touches you like a cold fog. This good woman feels that a great many of her neighbours are going to be lost — myself, among them; so yesterday she came over to labour with me.

Just as I was running round the house to hide from her, she caught sight of me and told Rhoda where to look for me.

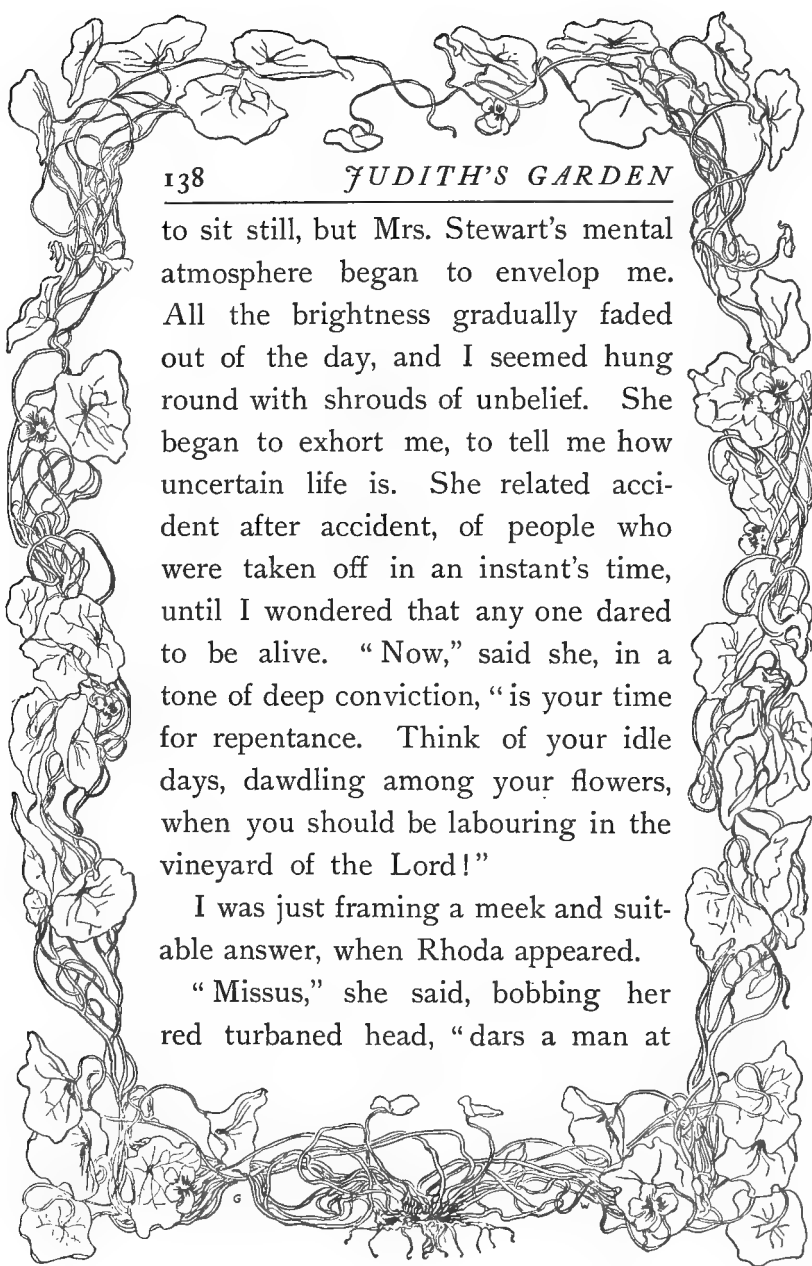
"I don' think she's home, missus," said Rhoda.

"Yes, she is," returned Mrs. Stewart; "you will find her behind the house."

I came in, very reluctantly.

It was a charming afternoon and I invited Mrs. Stewart into the garden; but she said the sun always hurt her eyes. I told her she ought to see my roses; she replied that the salvation of souls was more to her than all the flowers that grow.

If you have ever been caught in such a trap, you will know how I felt. I took out my handkerchief and began to pleat and unpleat it; then I measured round it several times with nervous, hasty fingers. I rolled it into a tight little ball, unrolled it, then tried



to sit still, but Mrs. Stewart's mental atmosphere began to envelop me. All the brightness gradually faded out of the day, and I seemed hung round with shrouds of unbelief. She began to exhort me, to tell me how uncertain life is. She related accident after accident, of people who were taken off in an instant's time, until I wondered that any one dared to be alive. "Now," said she, in a tone of deep conviction, "is your time for repentance. Think of your idle days, dawdling among your flowers, when you should be labouring in the vineyard of the Lord!"

I was just framing a meek and suitable answer, when Rhoda appeared.

"Missus," she said, bobbing her red turbaned head, "dars a man at

dey back door as says he mus' see yo'."

Now I have always believed in good angels. Here was one at the back door.

"Please to excuse me, Mrs. Stewart," I said.

I found — not exactly an angel, but a tree agent. He was a tall, powerful man, and reminded me strongly of Captain Cuttle, one of Dickens's characters ; for he had lost a hand and wore in the place of it an iron hook.

"Is this Mrs. Elliot?" he inquired.

I told him it was ; and he informed me that my husband had purchased some crimson ramblers of him and that he had come to set them out. "It is rather late," he remarked, "but I guess they'll grow."

How thoughtful of dear Max! He knew how badly I wanted those roses.

"I should like to have them planted round those two tall elms," I said, pointing to the lawn. "I'll be out in just one moment."

I returned to my guest. "Mrs. Stewart," I said with mock regret, "I fear you will have to excuse me; a man has come on very important business. I find I must attend to it."

"Very well," she said reluctantly, "though it is a pity our interesting conversation must be broken off; however, I hope my warnings will sink into your heart. I shall call again — very soon."

"I shall be so pleased!" murmured my mock self.

When she was gone, my real self went into the kitchen to Rhoda.

"Rhoda," I said, "when that woman calls again, and you come out to look for me, you must never, never find me."

"Deed I won't, honey," she laughed. "Youse'll be clean lost!"

Pat had gone to the woods for muck, so I helped "Captain Cuttle" set out the roses; that is, I held them while he packed the earth about their roots.

"Bin sellin' trees and shrubs for forty years," said he. "Hev you got any rose pinies?"

"No," I returned, "I haven't."

"What's a garden without rose pinies! Jest wait an' I'll git my book."

A few minutes later "Captain Cuttle" and I were seated on a bench,

our heads bent over the same catalogue, eagerly discussing the merits of rose peonies.

When we arose, an half hour later, he was richer, but I was poorer. Nearly all my month's allowance had gone to beautify Tom Norton's garden.

As I watched him drive away, an uneasy feeling possessed me; I had parted with my money like a millionaire, but now like a miser I wished it back again. Still I consoled myself by thinking how silky and blowzy the peonies would look. Such healthy hearty flowers ought to be growing in every garden; it did one good just to look at them. I would not regret the money; but the first rainy day I must look over my wardrobe, take a stitch

here and a stitch there, and never, never again listen to the arguments of a tree agent.

"Max," I said, that evening, as we rowed out of the river into the lake, "some people try to do good but they fail."

"Who, now?" he asked.

"Mrs. Stewart. She makes religion something that nobody wants. She dresses it up in ghastly robes of fear and sets it before you. She is like Diogenes, searching with a lantern for good and always finding evil.

"Oh, I can't abide her! If any one could persuade me to be an infidel, it would be Mrs. Stewart. She makes me doubt the goodness of God."

My hands flew out in nervous, excited gestures. Max made room

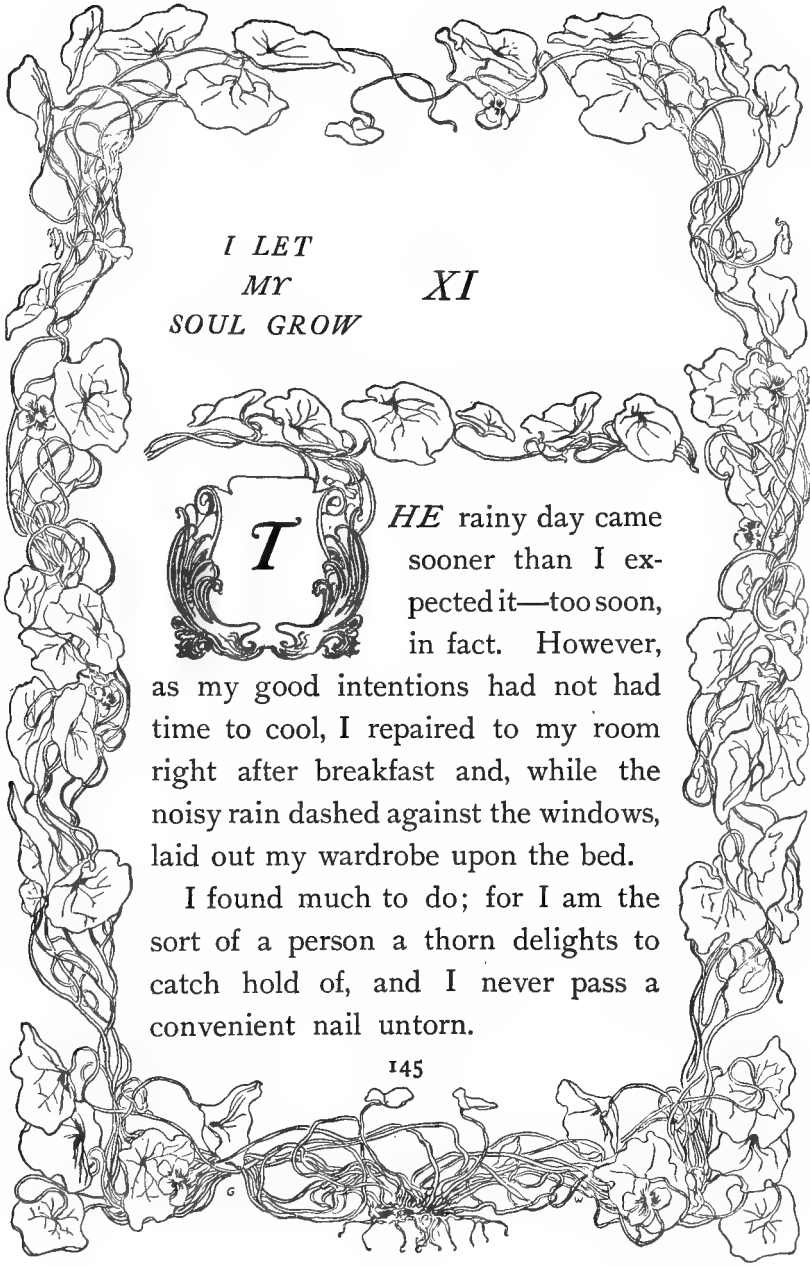
for me on the seat beside him, and gave me an oar.

I knew he was going to comfort me.

"Little wife," he said, "what's Hecuba to you, or you to Hecuba? Let Mrs. Stewart alone. If she wishes to see all the sins and evils of this world, that is her misfortune; but you just keep on living your simple, merry life and leave the rest to God!"

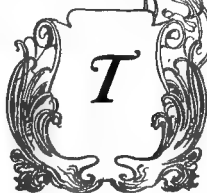
Oh, how much we should escape, if we could leave the rest to God!

Max's presence always rests me. Every day the hard problems of a busy life confront him, and he has little time for sentiment or enthusiasm; but he possesses the tact, combined with rare sympathy, which knows when to speak and when to keep silent.



*I LET
MY
SOUL GROW*

XI



THE rainy day came sooner than I expected it—too soon, in fact. However, as my good intentions had not had time to cool, I repaired to my room right after breakfast and, while the noisy rain dashed against the windows, laid out my wardrobe upon the bed.

I found much to do; for I am the sort of a person a thorn delights to catch hold of, and I never pass a convenient nail untorn.

I did not feel in the least like mending; but then, I argued, when had I ever felt like it? My thread would knot, and once I jabbed the needle into my finger and brought blood.

Now I began to realise how foolish it was to spend all my allowance for flowers and shrubs. Was I not, in one sense, myself a human flower? Ought I not to be suitably garbed? I thought, regretfully, how I had sowed my spring bonnet and nothing came up. That was a dead loss. I almost hated "Captain Cuttle" when I reflected that, through his persuasions, I had changed my long-desired mull gown into "rose pinies," as he called them. Those rose peonies would not blossom until another year; and by that time Mr. Norton might

be home to claim his own. Another dead loss.

As I sewed up a long rent in a white gown, I decided in my own mind that I ought to have a guardian. Really, I was not a responsible person, with my passion for gardens. It was a sort of mild insanity with me, that in the end might make me as poor as Hetty Allen. If Max should be taken from me, I feared I would not long be left at large. It so vexed me to think of my mental incapacity that I jerked the thread out of the rent and had it all to sew over again.

Presently I looked out and saw Pat working in the rain, rigged out like a sea captain, in a rubber coat and a tarpaulin.

Little streams of water ran off him when he bent over the wheelbarrow, and I heard him whistling "Bonny Doon" as he disappeared down the path. Pat has a strain of Scotch blood in him, I know, by his conversation.

Still I sewed on, and a feeling of real melancholy began to steal over me. Come to think of it, I am always melancholy when I sew. There is something about the task that grinds me; and I wonder at it, for it is such a womanly occupation. When I go forth and hear other women talk about their "winter, spring, summer, and fall sewing," I feel very small indeed. I never have any four seasons of sewing. The spring, for me, is not the time for

“spring sewing”; instead, I am all a-tiptoe to watch the coming of the birds. My head seems running over with the season’s ditties; and I am just as careless as the daffodil, who buys her yellow gown ready made.

The most of my things are bought ready made. I blush to confess it; yet how else could I be clothed? If I sewed, I should miss the carnival I so long to attend — the Mardi gras of nature. No, I have but one season of sewing, and that is winter, — dull, dreary winter! when old mother Nature’s babies are all hushed to sleep in the ground; when the birds are gone away, and the trees show only naked shivering branches. Then I had just as lief sew as not; for, as the

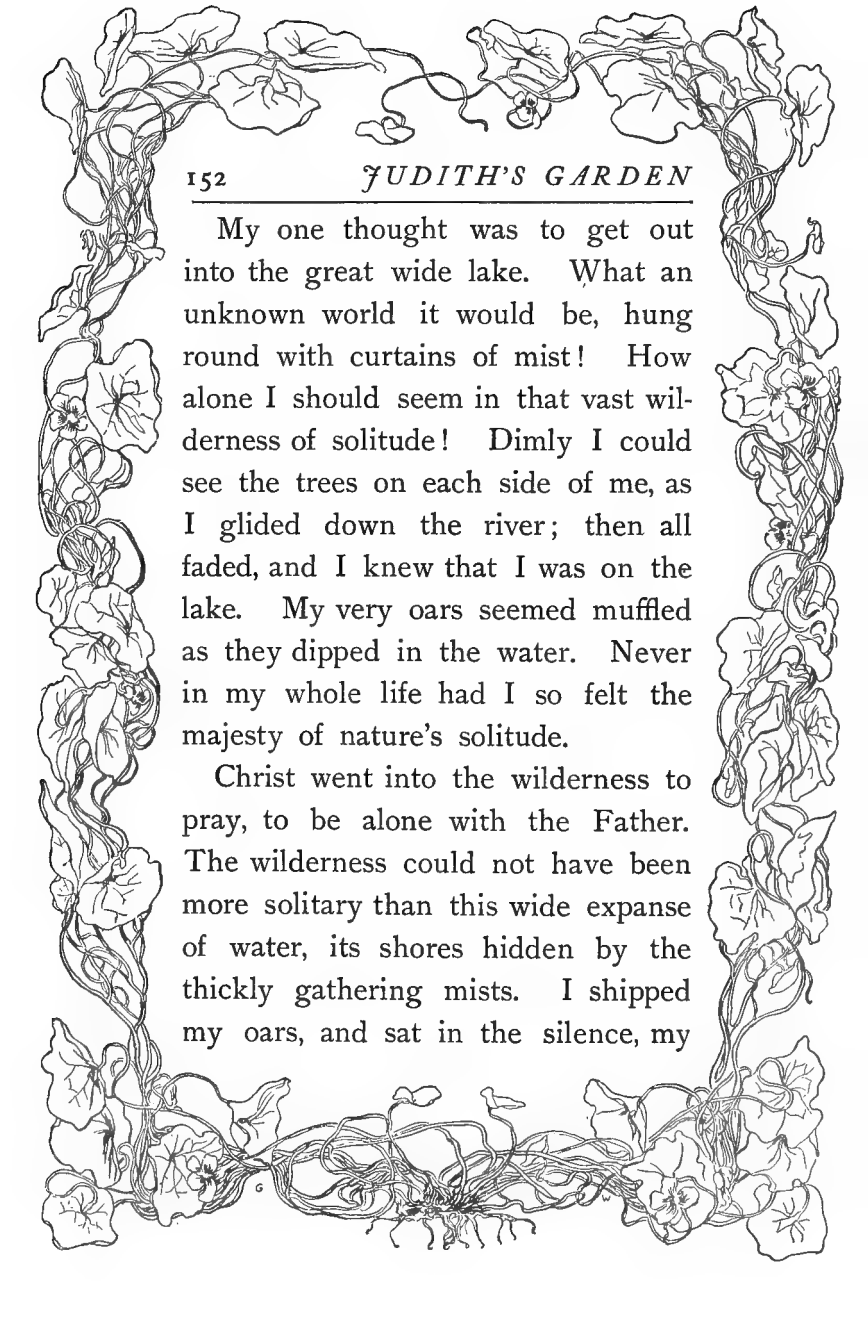
sparrow says, "There is no good time anywhere."

I tried to think, as I sat in my room, how much good the rain would do the flowers, and how it would swell the brook. What a little river I should have in my garden, rushing under the foot-bridge with a roar quite startling! I tried to picture the yellow warbler (whose home I had spied in an elderberry bush) sitting on her nest, her wings tightened down over the precious eggs, and the rain pelting through the leaves on her yellow back. I seemed to see the discomfort of her mate, standing upon one leg, with hanging head and woe-begone air. Some birds sing in the rain, but not in such a rain as this. Even Pat had

sought shelter, for I no longer saw him in the garden paths.

After lunch I tried on all my hats, and decided that each one was a little more unbecoming than the other. I pulled off the flowers to one and made a bow for another; and at last, in a very frenzy of nervousness, I scuttled them all back into a big box and rushed for my waterproof and cap. Donning these, I stole down the stairs, very quietly, lest Rhoda might hear me, and made a dash for the river.

I found that Pat had covered the boat, so it was quite dry. Pulling off the canvas I got into it and rowed hastily away. The rain was now falling straight down, for the temper of the storm was subsiding.



My one thought was to get out into the great wide lake. What an unknown world it would be, hung round with curtains of mist! How alone I should seem in that vast wilderness of solitude! Dimly I could see the trees on each side of me, as I glided down the river; then all faded, and I knew that I was on the lake. My very oars seemed muffled as they dipped in the water. Never in my whole life had I so felt the majesty of nature's solitude.

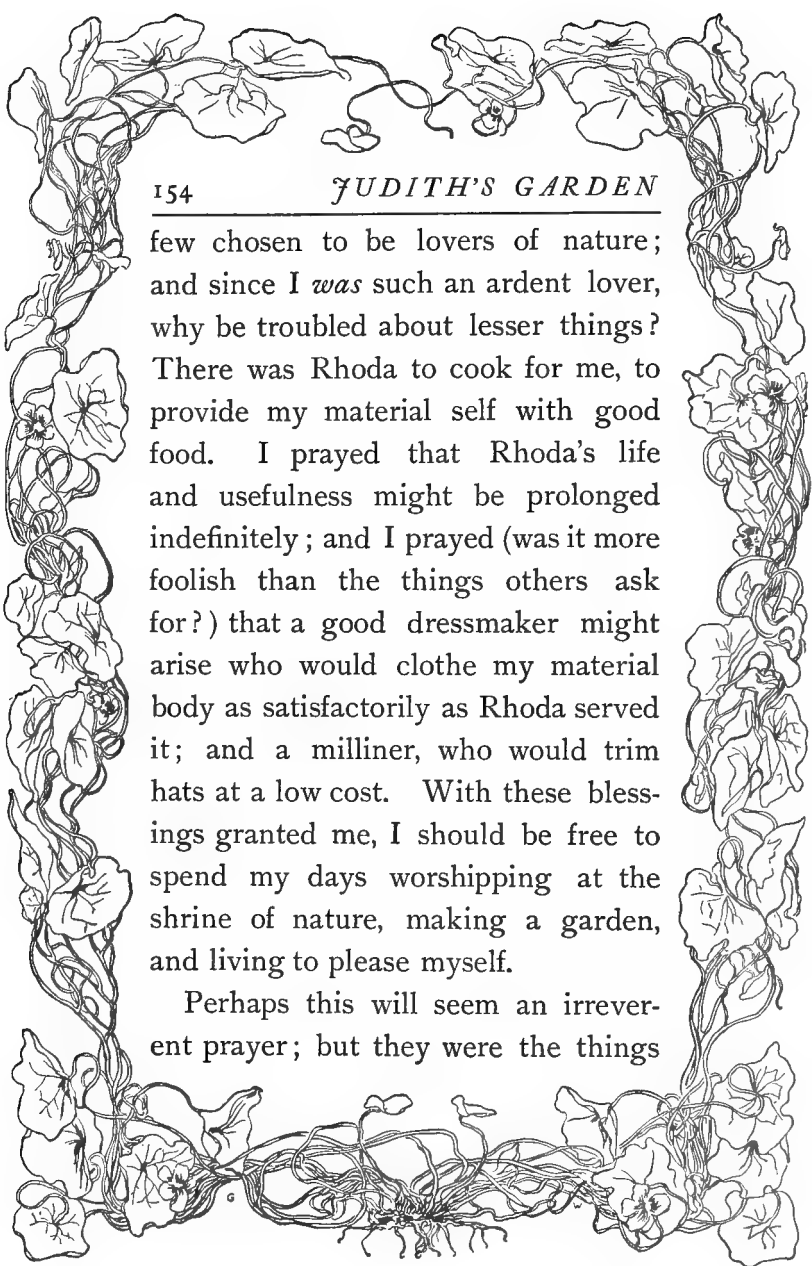
Christ went into the wilderness to pray, to be alone with the Father. The wilderness could not have been more solitary than this wide expanse of water, its shores hidden by the thickly gathering mists. I shipped my oars, and sat in the silence, my

face upturned to feel the swiftly falling baptism of rain. Somehow my soul grew very near to God; and presently my spirit began the complaint of prayer. I felt like a child telling its father of the little tangled threads of life, and begging him to pull them straight again.

I asked Him why He had made me to so love everything outdoors and nothing indoors? I fully realised that I was not as a woman should be.

I did not love housework or sewing, and I wanted nothing to vex me. I realised I was happier out here in the solitude than I should ever be in a drawing-room.

How happy I was! A mighty love for the whole universe welled up in me; I felt that I was among the



few chosen to be lovers of nature; and since I *was* such an ardent lover, why be troubled about lesser things? There was Rhoda to cook for me, to provide my material self with good food. I prayed that Rhoda's life and usefulness might be prolonged indefinitely; and I prayed (was it more foolish than the things others ask for?) that a good dressmaker might arise who would clothe my material body as satisfactorily as Rhoda served it; and a milliner, who would trim hats at a low cost. With these blessings granted me, I should be free to spend my days worshipping at the shrine of nature, making a garden, and living to please myself.

Perhaps this will seem an irreverent prayer; but they were the things

I most wanted, and I have found out that little everyday things asked for in trust are granted as quickly as great blessings.

I stayed out on that lake to let my soul grow, just as long as I dared. Never in my life have I so enjoyed myself. I should be the envied of ENVIED if people understood what a good time I had. At last I rowed back to the dock, and there stood Max, looking angry and anxious.

Poor old Max! He sometimes reminds me of a hen with a duckling.

"Thank Heaven!" he cried, "you are safe. What a turn you have given me! You must be crazy."

"Only a little lunny, dear," I laughed. "You silly old Max!

Why worry so about one woman?
There are thousands in the universe."

"Yes," he said crossly, stooping to fasten the boat; "and I am glad there is only one like *you*."

"I didn't dream you would be home, dear."

"I dare say not. I drove out early, it was so stormy, thinking how pleased you would be to see me. This is all the thanks I got; you were gone."

"But I have returned," I said sweetly.

"Yes, after I have suffered a thousand torments, thinking you might be drowned. How can you be so venturesome?"

"Max," I said, "I have a presentiment that I shall never be drowned."

Nature has so few real lovers, that she isn't going to kill off one to please anybody; I feel that I shall live to be an old, old lady. I have had a glorious time."

"What's for dinner?" growled Max.

"Dear Rhoda knows," I replied.

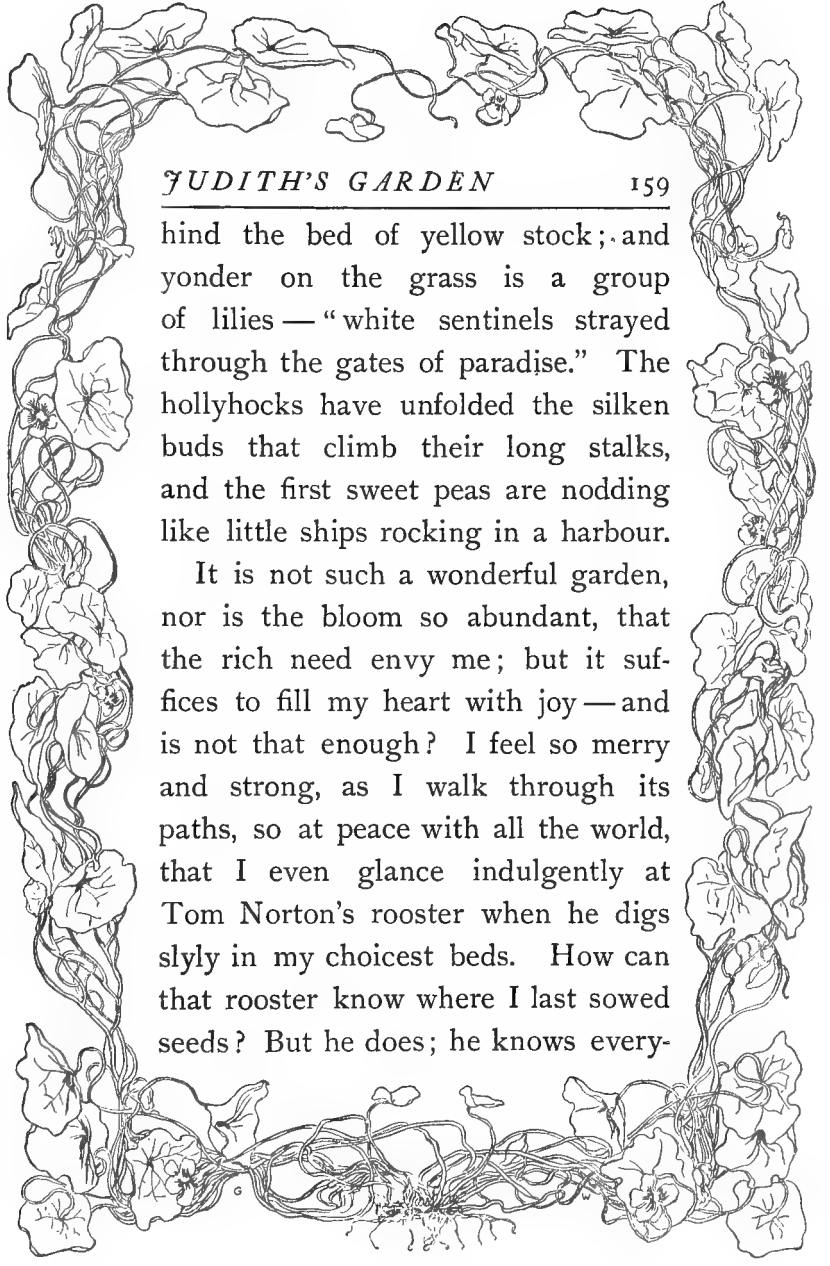
When I was dressed for dinner, Max relented. He is never cross for long. At dessert he looked across the table and smiled indulgently at me.

"I said," he remarked, "I was glad there was only one woman in the universe like you. It was because you are unique, and I like unique things."

I
ENTERTAIN XII
CALLERS



Y flowers are all beginning to bloom. It is as if some fairy had wandered through the garden and waved her magic wand; suddenly we have a carnival of flowers. Every afternoon the four o'clocks open their crimson petals and flash in the sun. They are homely flowers, but I love to see them. They make a splash of colour all down the kitchen walk. My larkspurs bloom tall and slender be-



hind the bed of yellow stock; and yonder on the grass is a group of lilies — “white sentinels strayed through the gates of paradise.” The hollyhocks have unfolded the silken buds that climb their long stalks, and the first sweet peas are nodding like little ships rocking in a harbour.

It is not such a wonderful garden, nor is the bloom so abundant, that the rich need envy me; but it suffices to fill my heart with joy — and is not that enough? I feel so merry and strong, as I walk through its paths, so at peace with all the world, that I even glance indulgently at Tom Norton's rooster when he digs slyly in my choicest beds. How can that rooster know where I last sowed seeds? But he does; he knows every-

thing about the garden; and the mischief he has wrought almost forces me to believe in reincarnation. Perhaps in some other life this fowl was an evil person, and is now forced to continue existence in the kingdom of lower animals. I often think so, when he looks at me so curiously wise and sly out of the extreme corner of one eye; then, toppling from side to side like an uneasy ship, scuttles down the garden walk.

You wonder that I do not kill him? I often threaten to; but then, he looks so strong and healthy, so eager to live; his feathers are so slick and mottled that, after all, I haven't the heart to commit the deed. That he would make good

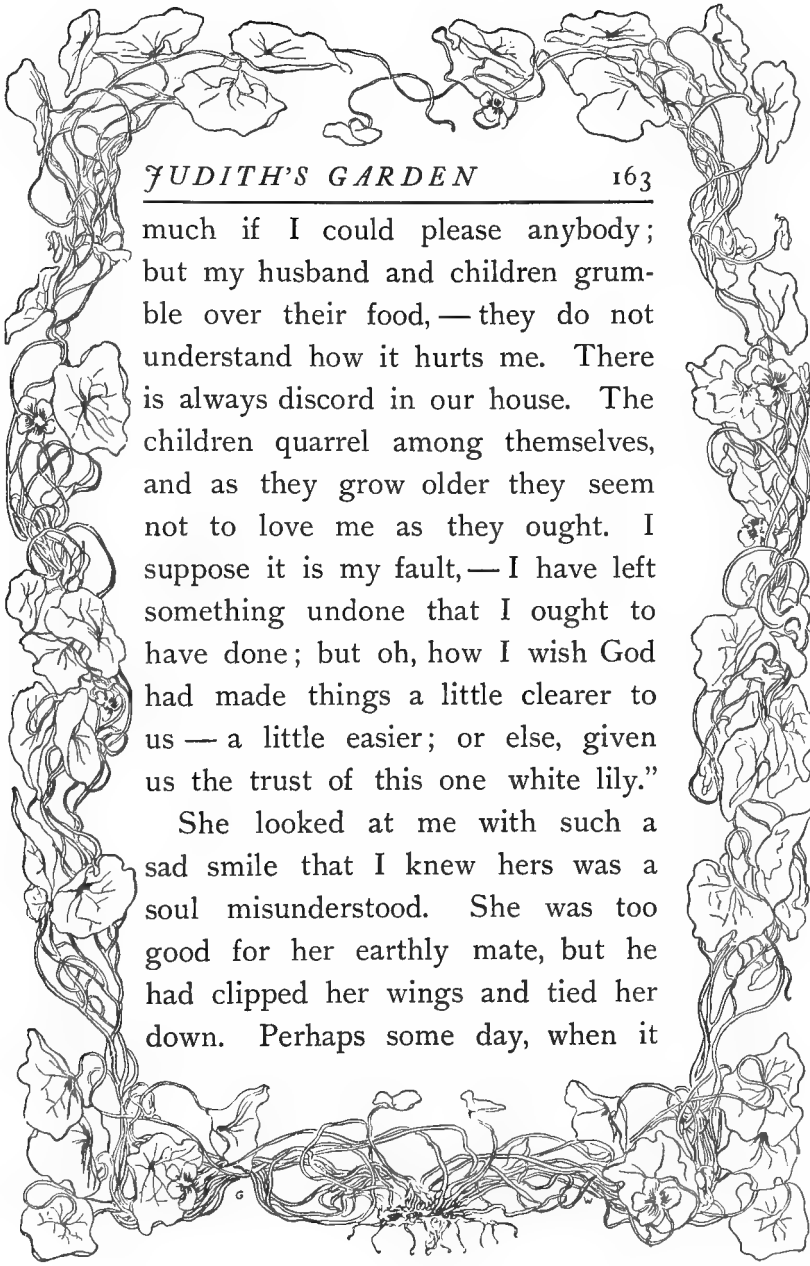
eating I have no doubt, — done into a chicken salad or a paté; but then — well, I imagine he looks upon me somewhat as a missionary looks upon a cannibal: he often shudders at my approach. Such are the different standpoints of life.

To-day I have been thinking how I wish my congenial friend would come and visit my garden. What real pleasure it would give me to see her golden head bending over the blossoms and to hear her talk about the things we both love. How I should enjoy posing before her as the monarch of this flowery kingdom, and telling her in pathetic tones of my struggles with bugs. She would certainly make a sketch of Pat in his droopy old felt hat

and blue overalls,—one of those clever little sketches she does so well; but here comes some one.

The some one was not my friend, but a little lady I am sorry for. She told me a few of her troubles, as we walked among the flowers. I felt more like weeping than smiling when she knelt beside my white lilies, a look of mute sorrow in her face.

“I feel like praying to them,” she said; “the sweet, silent things! There is nothing I love so well on earth as flowers; yet I cannot have them, for there are so many duties to attend to I have no time to cultivate them. I am a cook, a housemaid, a seamstress, and a laundress,—all in one. I would not mind so



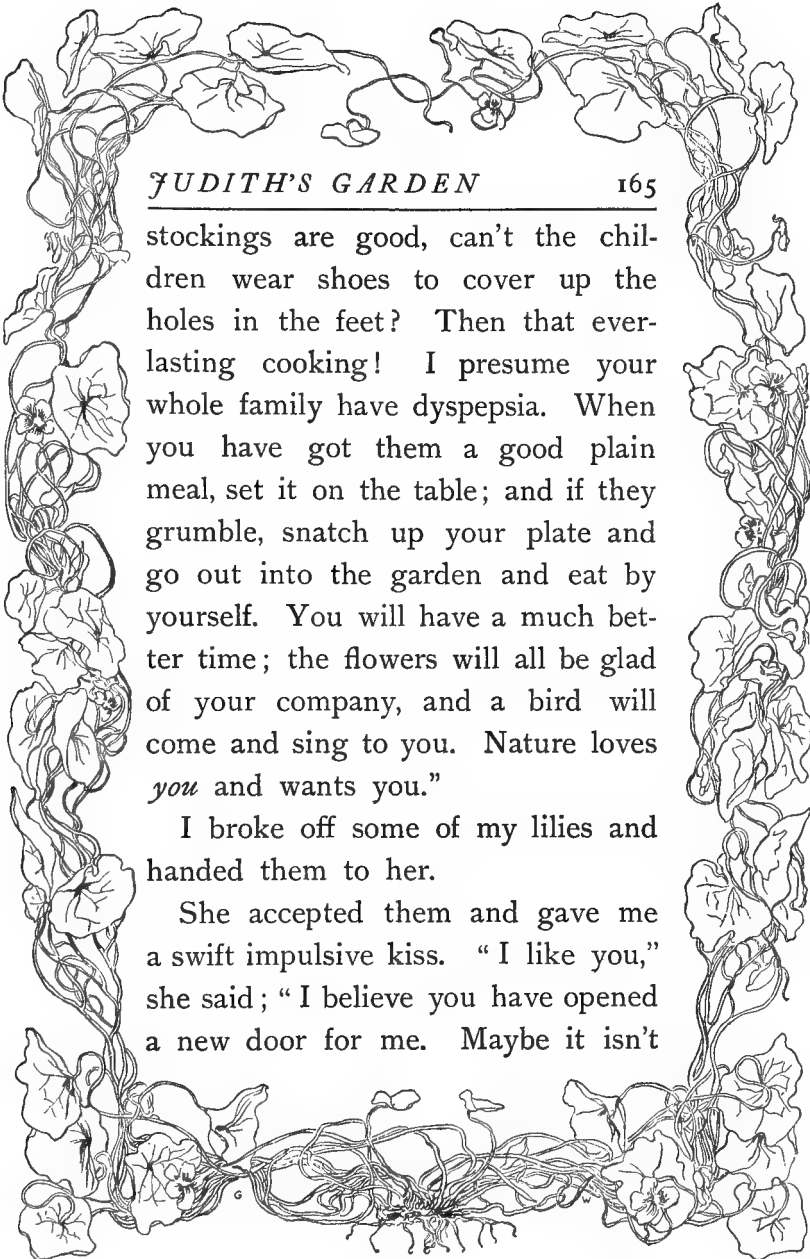
much if I could please anybody; but my husband and children grumble over their food,—they do not understand how it hurts me. There is always discord in our house. The children quarrel among themselves, and as they grow older they seem not to love me as they ought. I suppose it is my fault,—I have left something undone that I ought to have done; but oh, how I wish God had made things a little clearer to us—a little easier; or else, given us the trust of this one white lily.”

She looked at me with such a sad smile that I knew hers was a soul misunderstood. She was too good for her earthly mate, but he had clipped her wings and tied her down. Perhaps some day, when it

was too late, her children might know her and appreciate her, — after they had nearly killed her with gross neglect.

What should I say to her? I tapped my foot upon the garden walk and meditated, — I so care free, and she so weighted down. Should I tell her she had erred somewhere; and as we sow, so shall we reap? I might preach her a fine little sermon about positive and negative minds, and the power of self-control.

I did neither. I said: "You poor meek thing! why don't you kick over the traces? No time to cultivate flowers! Indeed, I would find time! Take the weekly darning, for instance. As long as the legs of the



stockings are good, can't the children wear shoes to cover up the holes in the feet? Then that everlasting cooking! I presume your whole family have dyspepsia. When you have got them a good plain meal, set it on the table; and if they grumble, snatch up your plate and go out into the garden and eat by yourself. You will have a much better time; the flowers will all be glad of your company, and a bird will come and sing to you. Nature loves *you* and wants you."

I broke off some of my lilies and handed them to her.

She accepted them and gave me a swift impulsive kiss. "I like you," she said; "I believe you have opened a new door for me. Maybe it isn't

right to starve my own soul just to please others. I'm going to try to have some flowers."

"That's right," I said heartily. "Pat shall dig up a basket of roots to take to you. Don't neglect your garden a single day, whatever else you neglect. Of course you'll have to wash the dishes; but write out this quotation, and pin it over the sink:—

"'A good garden is a continual delight, a paradise.'"

"I have always thought," she said, "a paradise would be a place where one did not have to worry."

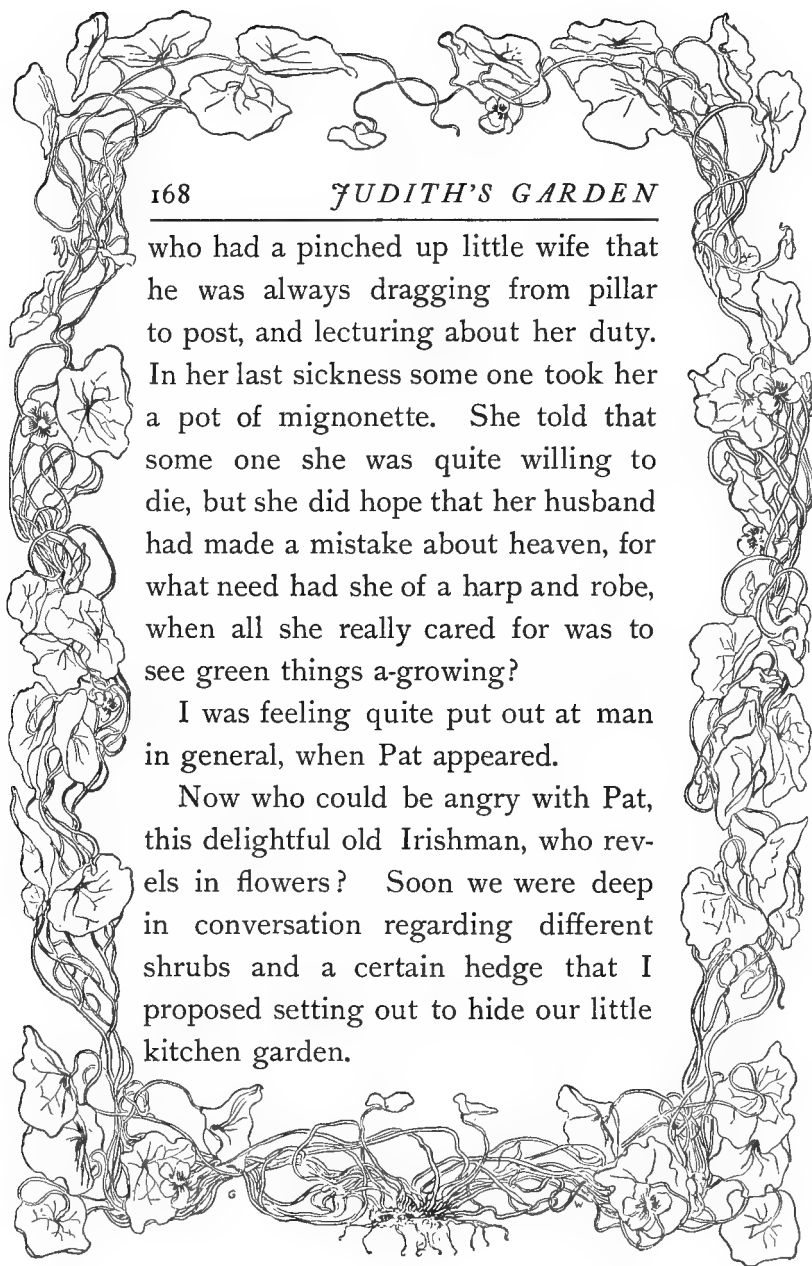
"It will surprise you," I replied, "to find how little one can worry in a garden. No matter how many troubles you take out into it, before you know it, they are gone. I tried

to worry some the other day, — just out of a sense of duty; but a big sun-flower laughed in my face, and every bloom I looked at seemed making fun of me.”

By this time we were at the gate. Her hands and arms were full of flowers, and she looked really cheerful. I told her Pat would be over later with the roots, and whenever she needed some one to help her in the garden, why just send for me.

Isn't it a shame that men are often selfish enough to deprive women of flowers? They don't realise that to starve a woman's soul is to dwarf her very existence. I never felt so glad in my life over the money I had spent in my garden.

I knew a Methodist minister once



who had a pinched up little wife that he was always dragging from pillar to post, and lecturing about her duty. In her last sickness some one took her a pot of mignonette. She told that some one she was quite willing to die, but she did hope that her husband had made a mistake about heaven, for what need had she of a harp and robe, when all she really cared for was to see green things a-growing?

I was feeling quite put out at man in general, when Pat appeared.

Now who could be angry with Pat, this delightful old Irishman, who revels in flowers? Soon we were deep in conversation regarding different shrubs and a certain hedge that I proposed setting out to hide our little kitchen garden.

"An arbbby vital is a good hedge," said Pat. "Bedad, I remimbers the hedges in the juke's garden, whin me uncle had the place. They grew so hoigh ye cud na see over thim; but thin there were little doors and windys cut in 'em, to look through at the stattys behint. What this garden nades, mum, is a few foine stattys.

"There used to be in the juke's garden," he continued, "a certain statty called Habby; 'twas a foine young woman wid an urn in her hand. She wa'n't dressed much, but me uncle hed a few modest vines trained over her. You cud look right through a hedge windy an' see her standing on her pedisell wid a shcarlet runner in bloom behint her.

Be jabbers, there's that dommed rooster!" and Pat made off.

He came back soon and resumed his story. "All round this statty was a bed of swate viles, and here the juke's little darter used to coom to pick flowers.

"I remimbers jest as well the little jukess. She wor a purty child; her hair hung in curls, and her eyes were as blue as furgit-me-nots.

"I wor a little freckle-faced divil, an' I used to stale up to watch her. Begorra! I thought her an angel; an' one day ses I to her, 'Whar's yer wings?'

"She turned quick, for I'd staled on her unawares. Ses she, 'I hev none, hev ye?'

"I was grate at story-tellin' thim

days! I answered her, 'Shure I hev, but they're shut up tight on me back under me jacket.'

"'Can ye fly?' axed she, her eyes gittin' big.

"'Fly is it?' ses I; 'that's aisy enuf.'

"Thin ses she, 'Cloimb up to the top o' the statty and fly off, that I may see ye.'

"Shure I was quick witted. Ses I to myself, 'I'll fool her. I'll cloimb up the statty, and when I'm on the head o' it, arrah, but I'll slip down on the other side, and the little missus — she'll think I've flew off.'

"I cud cloimb like a cat in thim days; up I wint before ye cud say shpat! an' whin I reached the head o' Habby, I stood on one leg an' balanced mesilf loike an accybat.

"The little jukess danced round the base. 'Fly, fly!' called she.

"'That I will,' ses I, 'as soon as I gits me wings loose,' an' I tuk off me jacket an' threw it down.

"'Now,' ses I, in a grate voice, 'I'm goin'!' Jest then I looked down, an' there stood the *old* jukess a-peeking at me thru' a windy in the hedge.

"Begorra, but I was scairt! I jist lost me balance and doun I fell into that vilet bed an' broke me leg.

"Wall, I lay three weeks in me uncle's house a-mendin'; thin he sint me home; but before I wint the little jukess came to see me.

"She stood, holdin' the hand o' the nurse and lookin' at me out o' her blue eyes. 'Boy,' ses she, 'I know why ye did-na' fly.'

“‘Why?’ axed I.

“‘Me mither scairt ye; but,’ ses she, comin’ closer, ‘ye’ll fly some day, and so will I.’

“I’d not been home long whin I heerd that the little jukess wor dead. She tuk the shcarlet faver. Shure, she got her wings sooner than I thought fur.”

“Pat,” I asked, “do you believe that the angels have wings?”

“Begorra, I do.”

“Do you expect to fly?”

“Thot I do, agin I escapes purgatory. ’Twill be foine.”

He looked so gentle and honest, so utterly truthful, that somehow I envied him his faith.

I have had more calls to-day — the ladies whom I overheard discussing

me in the woods. While my rose bed is not at its best, there is still a great deal of bloom left. They have kept their word.

My mock self was ready to greet them.

"So happy to make your acquaintance, dear Mrs. Elliot," said one.

I murmured a polite nothing.

"We have heard such sweet things about you," continued the other, effusively, "that we have been longing to call."

"I used to know your husband," said the first woman. "What a happy man he must be!"

"He is well," I said coldly.

"You are very fond of flowers, we hear. It must be such a delight to cultivate them!"

"It is," I replied, with animation.
"My rose bed is still in bloom."

"How we should love to see it!"

"You shall certainly have that pleasure. Come into the garden."

They gave little screams of mock delight when they beheld Tom Norton's bushes bearing *my* roses.

"Do you ever break them?" asked the elder lady.

"No," I said untruthfully; "I just let them stay on the bushes. It seems a sin to pick flowers."

"Indeed" (rather crestfallen), "we always supposed flowers were to pick."

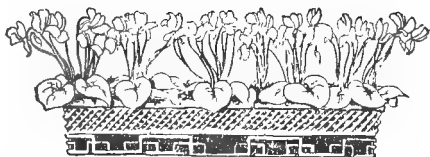
"Some people think so, but others think differently; say, eccentric people like myself. They believe flowers can feel."

"Not eccentric, oh, no!" they murmured.

I bade them good-by, and felt my ears tingle for an hour afterward, thinking what they could and would say about me.

Later in the afternoon I picked two great bunches of roses, one for Hetty Allen, who mistook me for an orchid; and the other for the poor old woman that, with a mother's love, fancied in me her "Mary Ann."

Pat took them across the fields to the poor-house.



*I BUILD
AN
AIR CASTLE*

XIII



L *ATE* last night,
by the stage-coach,
Mr. Rainsford, the
florist, sent me a
basket of asters — large, hardy plants
ready for bedding.

As if the plants were not enough,
the stage-coach disgorged a visitor.
I eyed him askance; not so, Max.
He literally stepped on my basket of
asters in his haste to clasp the hand
of this visitor.

"Where did you drop from?" he cried.

"On my way to Boston," said the stranger. "Thought I would look you up for a night."

"You did right, old man! This is my wife. Judith, let me present my old college mate, Mr. Donald Warren."

My mock self murmured, "So glad to know you!" then we walked back to the house, and presently I ran in to Rhoda.

"We've got company, Rhoda!" I exclaimed.

"'Deed I knows it, honey. Don' I see him gittin' out de coach? We'se got a good dinnah. All I needs ex-try is t'other head o' lettus and sum mo' redishes."

"I'll get them for you, Rhoda," I said, and I flew out into the now dusky kitchen garden. Here I ran against a boy coming up the walk between the rows of four o'clocks.

He thrust a letter into my hand and turned; I saw his bare legs twinkling down the path.

The letter was from Pat. By the light of the kitchen lamp I deciphered it.

"HONOURED MISSUS: This is writ to tell ye I've felled and spraint me ankle. Me ruff sprung a lake an' I got on the lhadder to mind it. It bruck an' let me down,—the lhadder I mane, not the ruff. I've got me leg in hot wather, but thim ashters air worritin' me. They're comin' to-noight

and nade plantin' to-morry. Look out for thim. If yese can't plant them, sprinkle thim well wid wather, and set thim in the shade; but the shpade is handy under the binch, an' thim ashters shu'd be set foive inches apart.

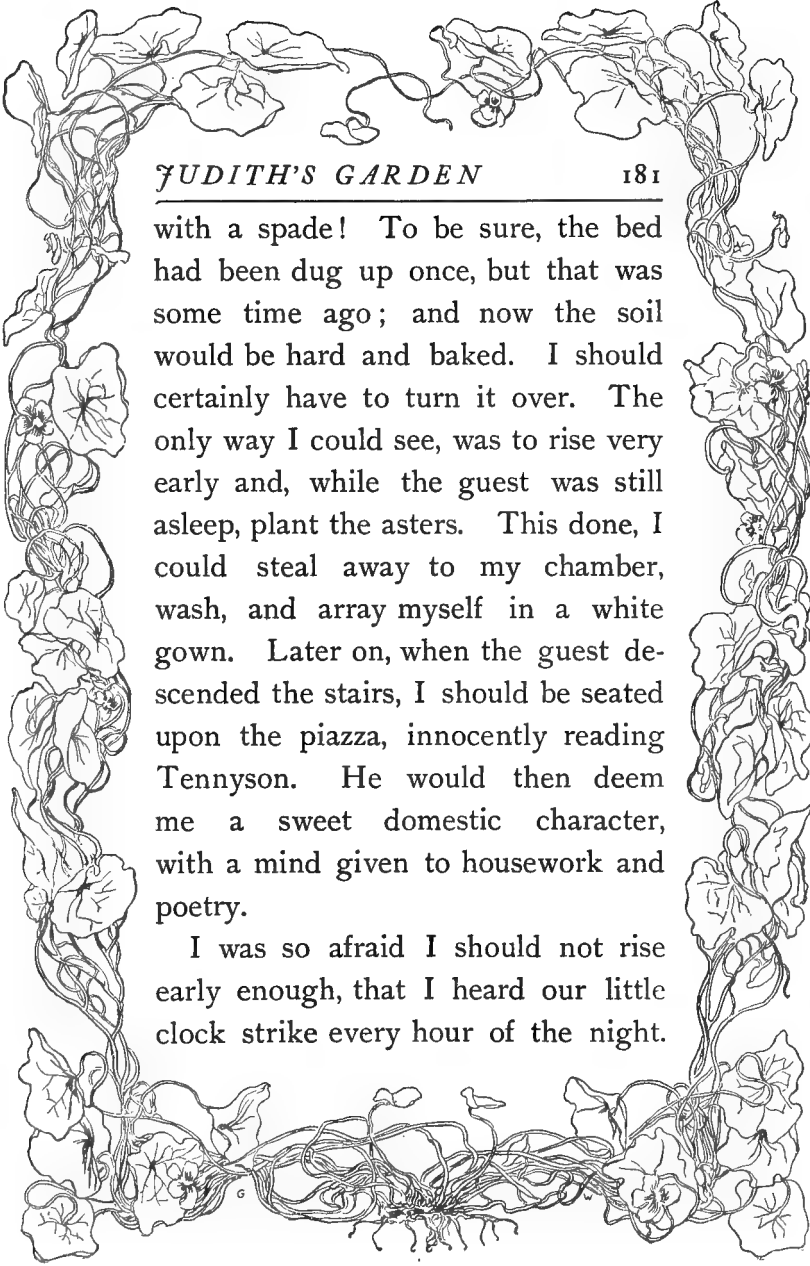
"Your respectful sarvent,

"PATRICK MONAHAN."

Now I was sole gardener — monarch of all I surveyed.

Before sleeping that night, I decided upon my course. The asters must be planted, and the very bed I had designed for them was directly under the guest chamber on the south side of the house.

What a horrifying thing it would be, should the guest look forth and discover his host's wife turning earth



with a spade! To be sure, the bed had been dug up once, but that was some time ago; and now the soil would be hard and baked. I should certainly have to turn it over. The only way I could see, was to rise very early and, while the guest was still asleep, plant the asters. This done, I could steal away to my chamber, wash, and array myself in a white gown. Later on, when the guest descended the stairs, I should be seated upon the piazza, innocently reading Tennyson. He would then deem me a sweet domestic character, with a mind given to housework and poetry.

I was so afraid I should not rise early enough, that I heard our little clock strike every hour of the night.

At last I fell into a doze, and awoke at five. I stole out of the bed and dressed quickly; then I hurried down and found the spade under the bench — just where Pat had said it was. The strong, healthy asters looked none the worse for the night.

Just as I turned the first shovelful of dirt, a cat-bird alighted upon the limb of an elm near me, and began to sing. Who ever heard a more dulcet strain! The little creature, in Quaker's garb, held forth as if his temper never could be ruffled. I dote upon his song; but for once I felt like crying — "Hush!"

If the guest should hear him, would he not look forth in search of the singer? I began to turn the earth faster and to pant a little. Pres-

ently a blind flew open and a large hearty voice called :—

“ Here, here, let me do that! ”

I looked up and beheld our guest, fully robed, leaning out of the window.

“ Whatever are you doing? ” he asked.

“ Turning earth,” I said a little suddenly.

“ Where is Max? ”

“ Asleep.”

“ Does he let you dig? ”

“ He does not let me; I just do it.”

“ I am coming down to help you,” he said.

“ I shall do very well alone,” I returned, not a little vexed; but he did not seem to hear me. I heard him coming down the stairs, two steps at a time, and a moment later

he had taken the spade out of my hand.

It was too provoking to be caught in this manner! I knew I looked cross.

The brown earth flew in every direction, and a hard little chunk hit me on the cheek.

"If you are going to dig," I said severely, "do it properly. See, you are throwing the dirt all out of the bed."

"So I am," he said, scraping the grass with his spade; "but you see it is such a delight to dig that I forgot myself."

"Do you really like it?" I said, brightening.

"Of course; who doesn't?"

"Why, lots of people. Did you ever see a lady, before, with a spade?"

"My mother used to garden," he said promptly; "and she was the sweetest, dearest lady on earth."

"Did she used to dig?" I inquired.

"She had a trowel and worked among the plants."

"Oh," I said scornfully, "that was respectable. I have heard that even Queen Victoria owned a trowel; but to use a spade —"

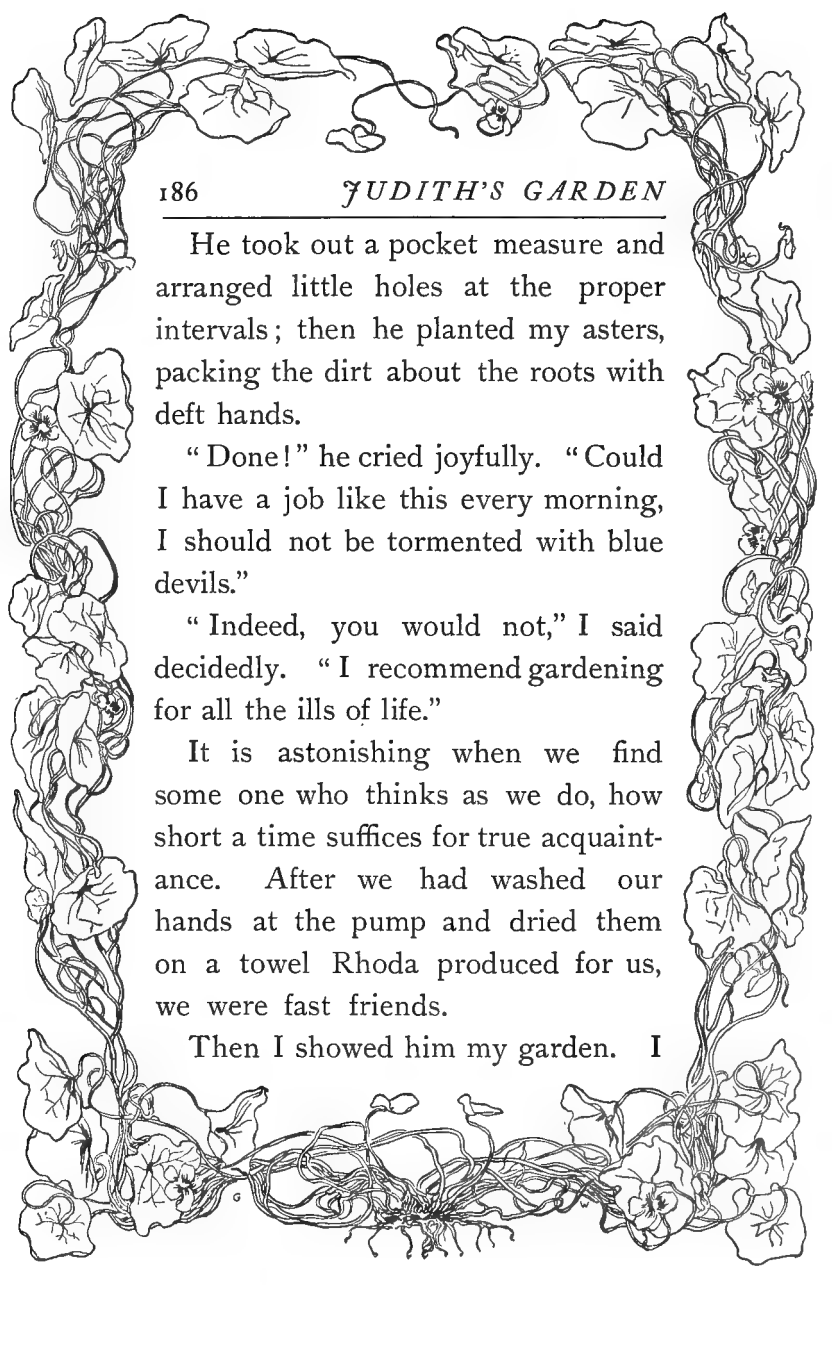
By this time he had dug up the bed. "Now what shall I do?" he inquired.

"Why, rake it," I said; and I handed him that implement.

I saw that he knew how to work, for soon the bed was levelled and the soil well pulverised.

"Now?"

"Plant the asters," I commanded, "just five inches apart."



He took out a pocket measure and arranged little holes at the proper intervals; then he planted my asters, packing the dirt about the roots with deft hands.

"Done!" he cried joyfully. "Could I have a job like this every morning, I should not be tormented with blue devils."

"Indeed, you would not," I said decidedly. "I recommend gardening for all the ills of life."

It is astonishing when we find some one who thinks as we do, how short a time suffices for true acquaintance. After we had washed our hands at the pump and dried them on a towel Rhoda produced for us, we were fast friends.

Then I showed him my garden. I

took him by the kitchen path, all glowing with four-o'clocks, and round the spring, till we came suddenly upon the old ice-house, a perfect mass of shining morning-glories. He did what I expected him to do — enthused !

The more he enthused, the more my heart warmed toward him ; until I felt I could be a sister to him, an aunt, or anything ! I might even pick out a suitable wife for him.

There was Priscilla Brown — my pulses leaped at the thought. How more than delightful to have such a romance on hand ! but then, I was not acquainted with Priscilla Brown.

'Twas unlikely that I could manage a match between her and this unusually agreeable man. However,

the idea pleased me, and being expert at planning, I quite forgot myself while conducting our guest through the rest of the garden.

He talked on in the most enthusiastic manner, and described several unknown plants to me; but my head was in the clouds—I was busy engaging and marrying him to Priscilla Brown. Just as I was hunting for a suitable minister to tie the knot, he said sharply:—

“Pardon me, but this is three times I have asked you a question. Is that rose a Louis Van Houtte?”

I reluctantly gave up the search.

“No,” I said a little impatiently, “that is an Alfred Colomb. They are not in the least alike.”

He smiled. “Would it be imperti-

nent," he asked mischievously, "to inquire what you have been thinking about?"

I coloured. This is another silly habit of mine. I felt my cheeks growing as red as the Alfred Colomb. For a moment my liking for him died out. I saw in him only an overly curious person. He noticed my confusion.

"Don't tell," he said lightly. "Here comes Max."

Down the garden path sauntered lazy Max. I ran to pin a rose in his buttonhole.

Our guest remained two days; and though I walked with him through the lane and the fields to the Brown premises, not a sign did we see of Priscilla. To be sure, we

once met the tall, thin, old gentleman, Mr. Electrical Brown, who lifted his rusty silk hat to us in a courteous bow.

Mr. Warren went away heart whole, but a dream of future conquest remained with me: he had promised to come again.



HER
HOME

XIV

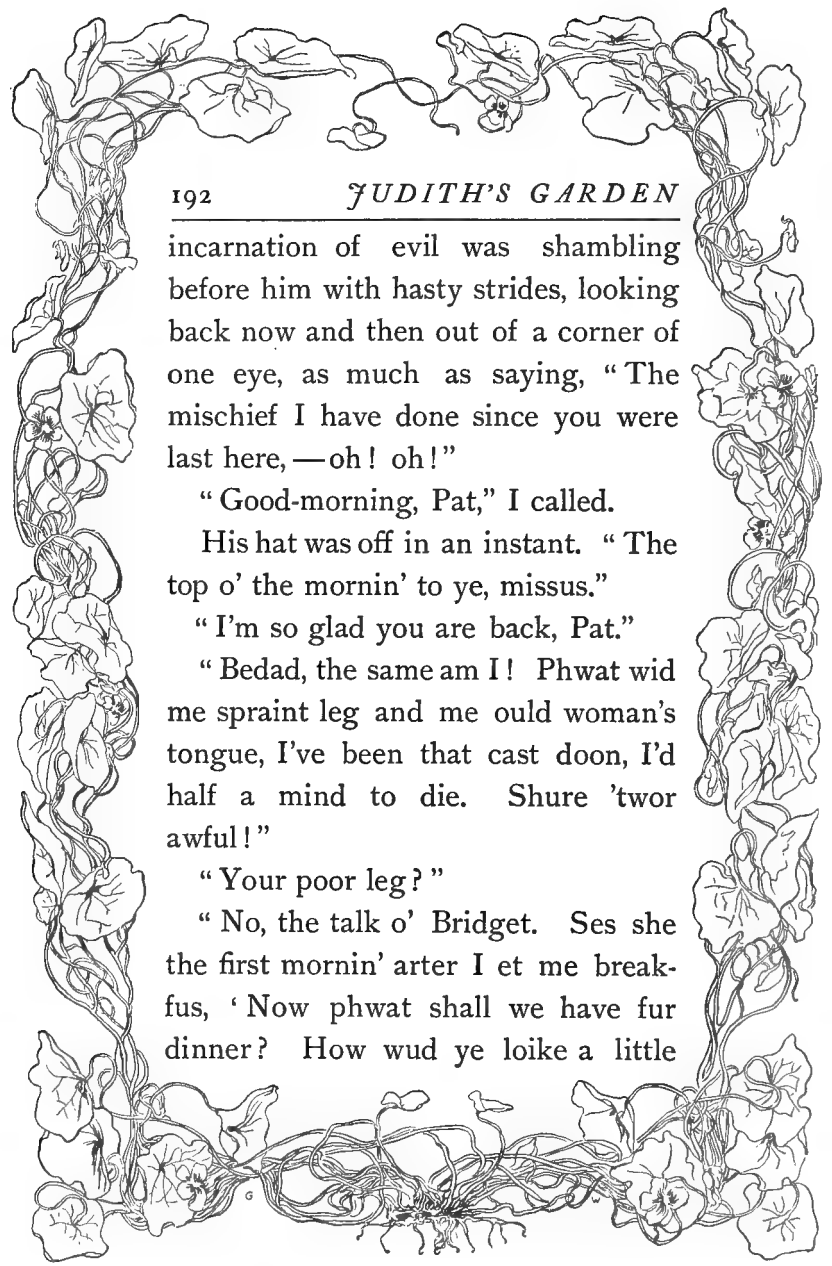


I

T was some time before Pat returned to work. The garden needed him sadly. A lusty crop of weeds had sprung up in the beds, and grew and grew like Jack's beanstalk.

I hailed his return with joy. Somehow, the familiar figure in the blue overalls and drooping felt hat made the garden complete.

The first I saw of him he was chasing Tom Norton's rooster; that re-



incarnation of evil was shambling before him with hasty strides, looking back now and then out of a corner of one eye, as much as saying, "The mischief I have done since you were last here, — oh! oh!"

"Good-morning, Pat," I called.

His hat was off in an instant. "The top o' the mornin' to ye, missus."

"I'm so glad you are back, Pat."

"Bedad, the same am I! Phwat wid me spraint leg and me ould woman's tongue, I've been that cast doon, I'd half a mind to die. Shure 'twor awful!"

"Your poor leg?"

"No, the talk o' Bridget. Ses she the first mornin' arter I et me break-fus, 'Now phwat shall we have fur dinner? How wud ye loike a little

biled cabbage and a pataty an' a slice o' pork?'

"Ses I, 'I'm full now.'

"'Wud ye loike 'em?' coaxed she.

"'Go 'way,' ses I, 'I'm full.' But, begorra, she worrited me till I sed I'd take anything a-tall a-tall. Thin she clattered the dishes till me head ached.

"Shure, soon 'twas dinner toime, an' I et me pork an' cabbage an' pata-ties, and whin I was full up, ses she:—

"'Now, darlint, phwat will ye hav fur shupper?'

"'Dom shupper!' ses I, 'I'm full.'

"'Wud ye loike a biled fish wid some carrots an' a slice o' toasted bread?'

"'Go 'way,' ses I, 'I'm full.'

"But, begorra! she kep' at me till I

told her I'd ate 'em; thin she clattered the dishes till me soul wor wroth in me.'

"Arter the shupper, ses she, 'Now phwat will we hav fur breakfus?'

"Be jabbers, but I was sound aslape. I turned on me side an' she cud na wake me. She shook me loike mad, an' thin the fright tuk her an' she screamed, 'He's ded! me Pat's ded!'

"I niver stirred a shtroke. 'Twor mighty comfortable bein' ded, till she up and tost a bucket o' cold wather in me face to bring me to; thin I set up an' had some talk wid her.

"Wal, that avening I got restless. The pain in me leg an' the worritin' about the garden near druv me crazy, an' whin thim clatterin' ould dishes

wor washed, I groaned out, 'Ooh! ooh!'

"Bridget 'flew to me bedside an' offered me a touch o' gruel, and thin, whin I stopped for fear she'd git me another male, shure she offered to rade to me.

" 'I've a tasty book,' ses she.

"It had a grane cover and looked foine.

" 'Begin,' ses I.

"Thin she sot down beside me bed an' opened the book an' began to rade. Ses she, 'A foine recipy for a poond cake.

" 'Take tin eggs, an' one poond o' butter; a quart o' flour. Bate the eggs light, separatin' the yelks from the whites —'

" 'Me God,' ses I, 'hoold on! If ye

rade anither word out o' that book,
I'll commit susyside.'

" 'Thin I'll rade to mesilf,' ses she,
scairt loike; an' there she set a-
radin' out o' that book till tin o'clock,
an' me a-tossin' an' groanin' fit to
die.

"Nex' day I crawled into the wood-
shed and lay on me ould buffalo
robe, jest whar I cud look out o'
the door at the blue sky an' grane
fields. Somehow they comforted me."

"Pat," said I, in a small voice, "I
know just how you felt. When Mary
Ellen ruled me, and made me think
three times a day what we should eat,
I often wished to die."

"I loikes me vittles," said Pat, in a
matter of fact tone, "but I hates the
plannin' o' 'em."

I thought, "How alike are Pat and I."

"Ain't the phansy bed swate," he said presently, "wid thim little pokerish faces pakeing up at ye? I grows thim in a shady spot, an' they hold their colour and niver dwindle."

A moment later he was furiously pulling weeds from the verbena bed.

It was a hot morning, and I felt lazy; so I left Pat and sauntered down to the roadside to wait for the newspaper that is always tossed to us from the stage-coach. Soon a cloud of yellow dust apprised me that the coach was coming, and presently it drew up before our gate. The driver got down and opened the door. The moment I caught sight of the golden head inside, I knew a great

joy was in store for me, — the friend I loved had come to visit me.

"Oh, you dearest!" I cried in a flutter, "get out quickly. Where did you come from?"

"Maine," she replied, in a matter of fact tone. "I am returning from a sketching tour. Here's my box; and, driver, kindly hand me that umbrella and satchel."

"Where is your trunk?" I asked.

"Flitting birds carry light baggage," she replied. "I can stop only a night."

I have marked that day in my calendar with a red letter. It was such a perfect day, so filled with happiness, that I can never forget it.

Her eyes twinkled as she looked at me. "Recovered health, I see," she

said. "Have you learned the lesson, dear, that what we most long to do is what God intends us to do?"

"One might long to do something wicked," I said perversely.

"No," she returned gently, "I don't believe one ever longs to do evil; he is just forced into it."

"Dearest," said I, taking her hand, "I have known you for ten long years, but I have never known you to discover evil in a human soul. Don't you believe in evil?"

"How can I help it?" she replied sadly; "but I have learned one thing: never to look for evil, never to be suspicious of it. We find just what we look for, sweetheart; and there are so many good, true spirits in this lovely world, that we can afford to

wrap our arms around the wicked ones and love them into the light.

"You were so ill the last time I saw you, I can hardly believe this merry, rosy face is yours. Surely, you have found your true path, dear; the more intimate you grow with the flowers and the birds, the happier you become."

"I know it," I said; "I am shamefully happy this summer. You see I haven't a care: Rhoda, my cook, has taken a fancy to me, and thinks of all the meals; there is nothing for me to do but to make the garden and to enjoy myself. I almost wish I were not quite so happy."

"You don't wish any such thing, you little hypocrite!" she cried.

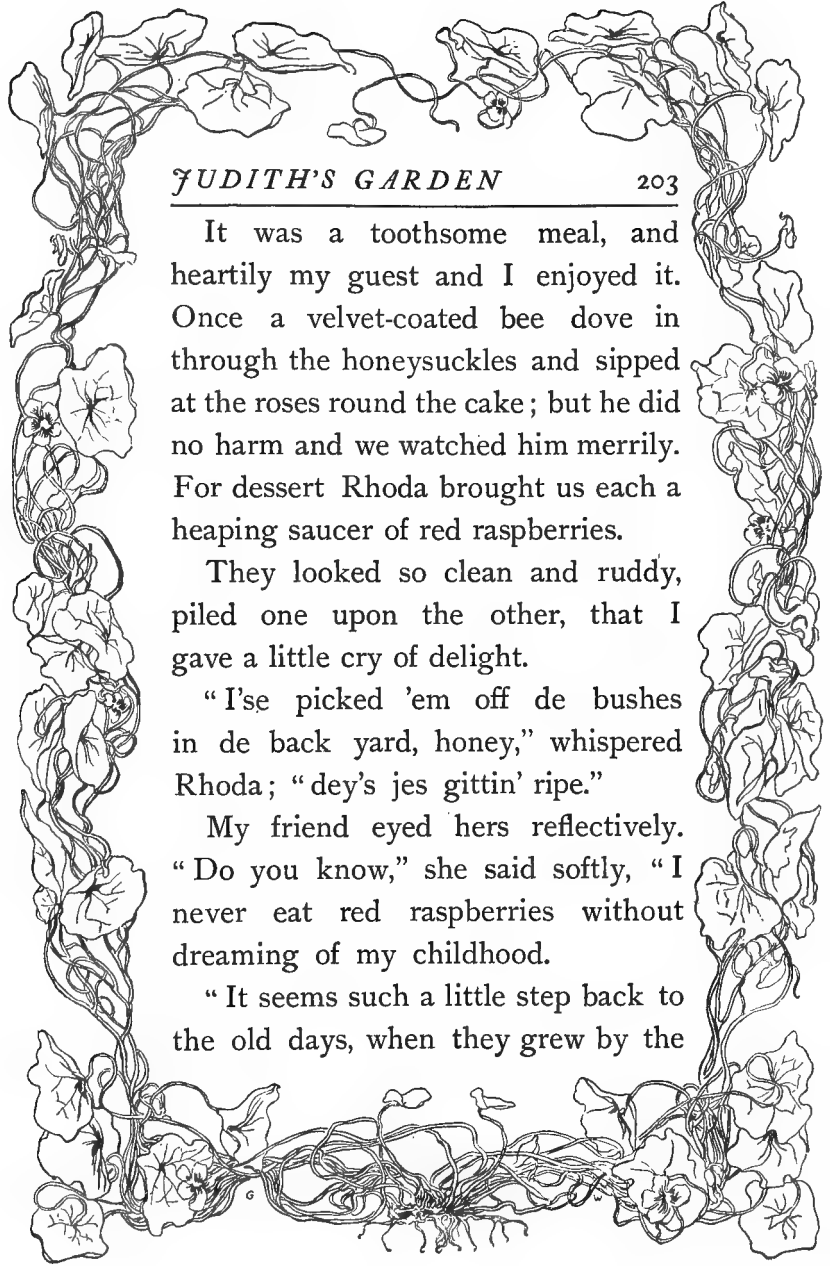
"You know you were just made to live among green things. Come,

don't fret over your happiness, but show me your garden."

That long morning in the garden was a feast of good things. It seemed to me I had never really known how lovely my flowers were until I saw her among them. She stood beside the great clump of Ascension lilies, and her purity and theirs seemed mingled into a sweet harmony. She wandered among the roses, bending now and then to raise one in her hand, touching it lovingly. How she loved them! better even than myself, who had fought for them. She knelt beside the pansy bed, and laughed gleefully as I pointed out the elfish faces that most appealed to me. She was like a child let free for its happy hour.

By and by Rhoda called us to lunch.

Dear Rhoda, may she live forever! Hers is a brain that can plan and execute. She had set the little round table out upon the porch behind the great honeysuckle. Placed upon it were a crystal pitcher of iced lemonade, a salad (decorated with rings of hard boiled eggs and disks of ruddy beets) cuddled in crisp green lettuce leaves; dainty, buttered sandwiches, and a cake like heaped snow, set round with a wreath of pale, sweet-brier roses. We were no sooner seated at this exquisite table than Rhoda appeared, in a clean white turban and snowy apron, bearing on one of my best china platters juicy, broiled chops and crisp potato chips.



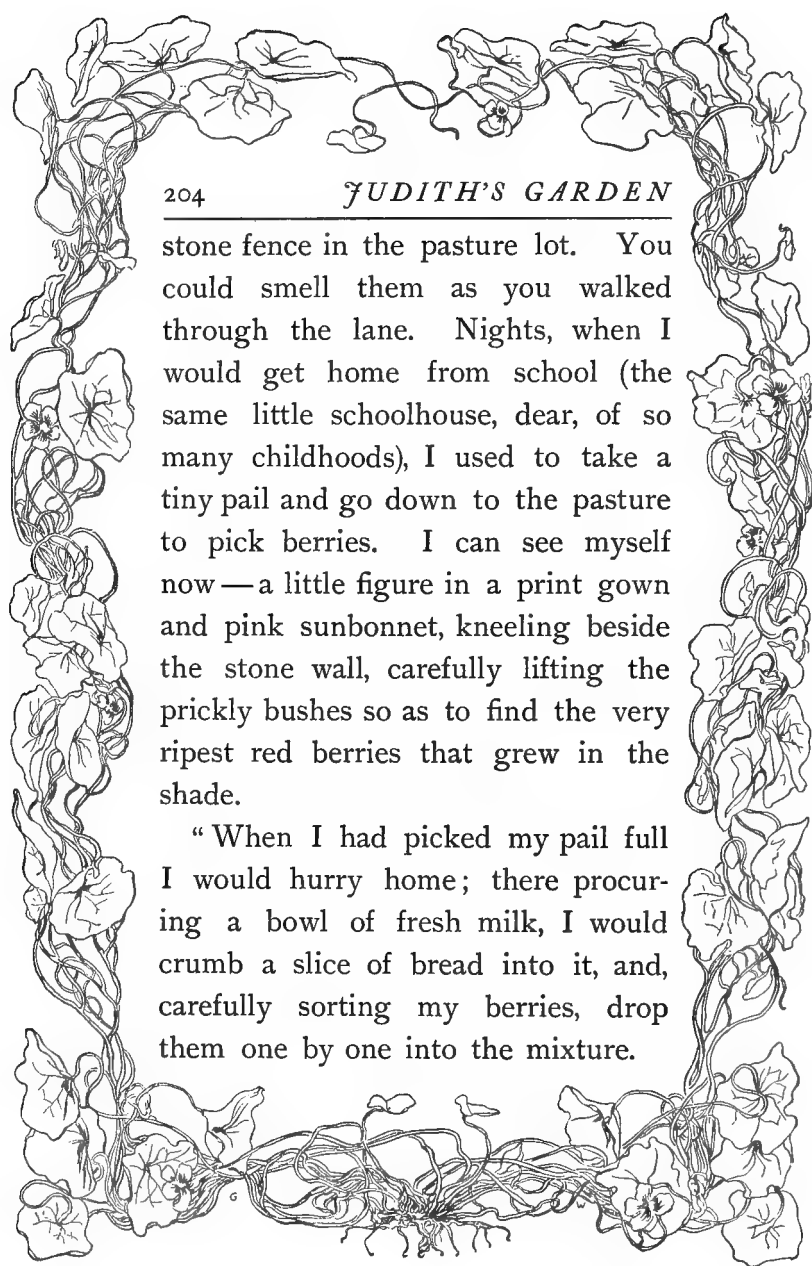
It was a toothsome meal, and heartily my guest and I enjoyed it. Once a velvet-coated bee dove in through the honeysuckles and sipped at the roses round the cake; but he did no harm and we watched him merrily. For dessert Rhoda brought us each a heaping saucer of red raspberries.

They looked so clean and ruddy, piled one upon the other, that I gave a little cry of delight.

"I'se picked 'em off de bushes in de back yard, honey," whispered Rhoda; "dey's jes gittin' ripe."

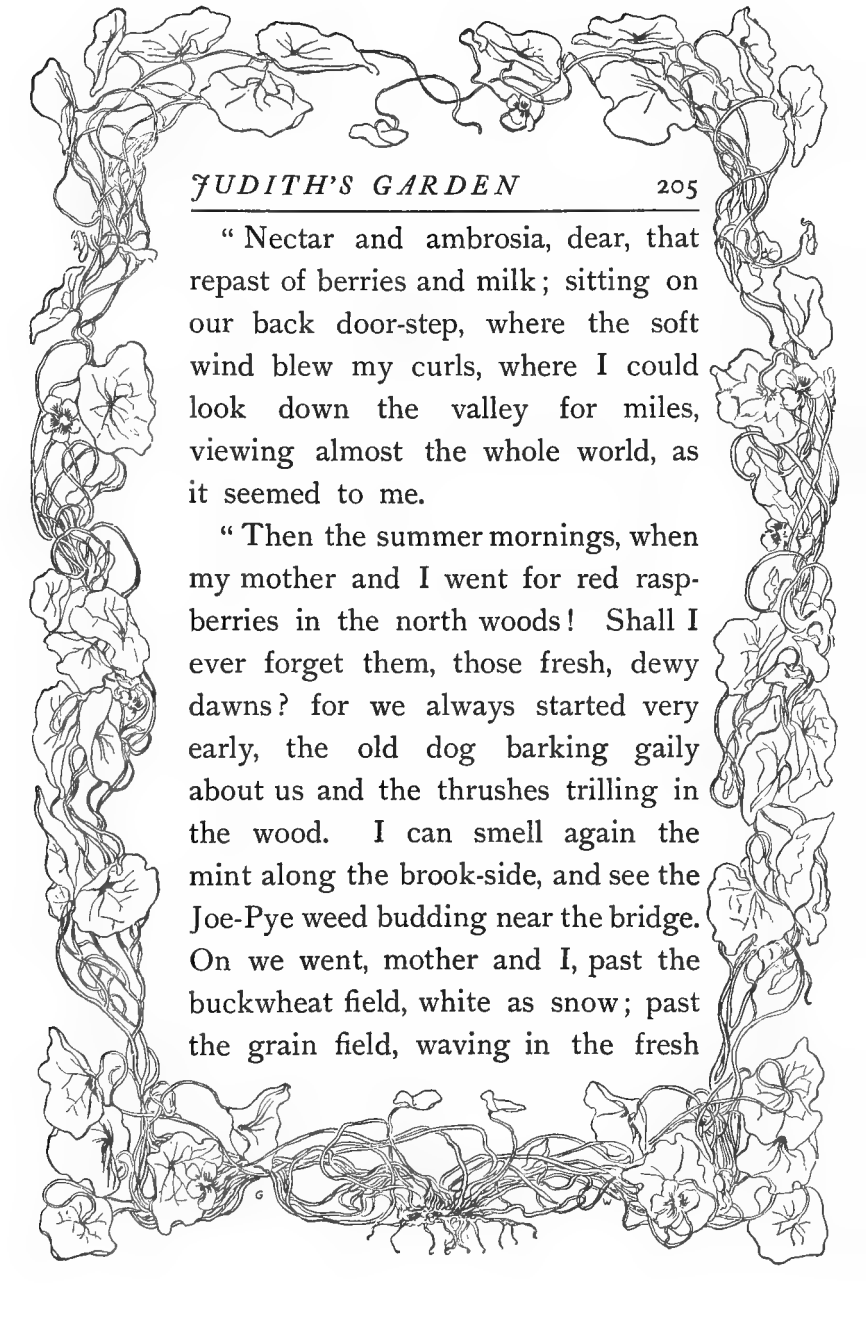
My friend eyed hers reflectively. "Do you know," she said softly, "I never eat red raspberries without dreaming of my childhood.

"It seems such a little step back to the old days, when they grew by the



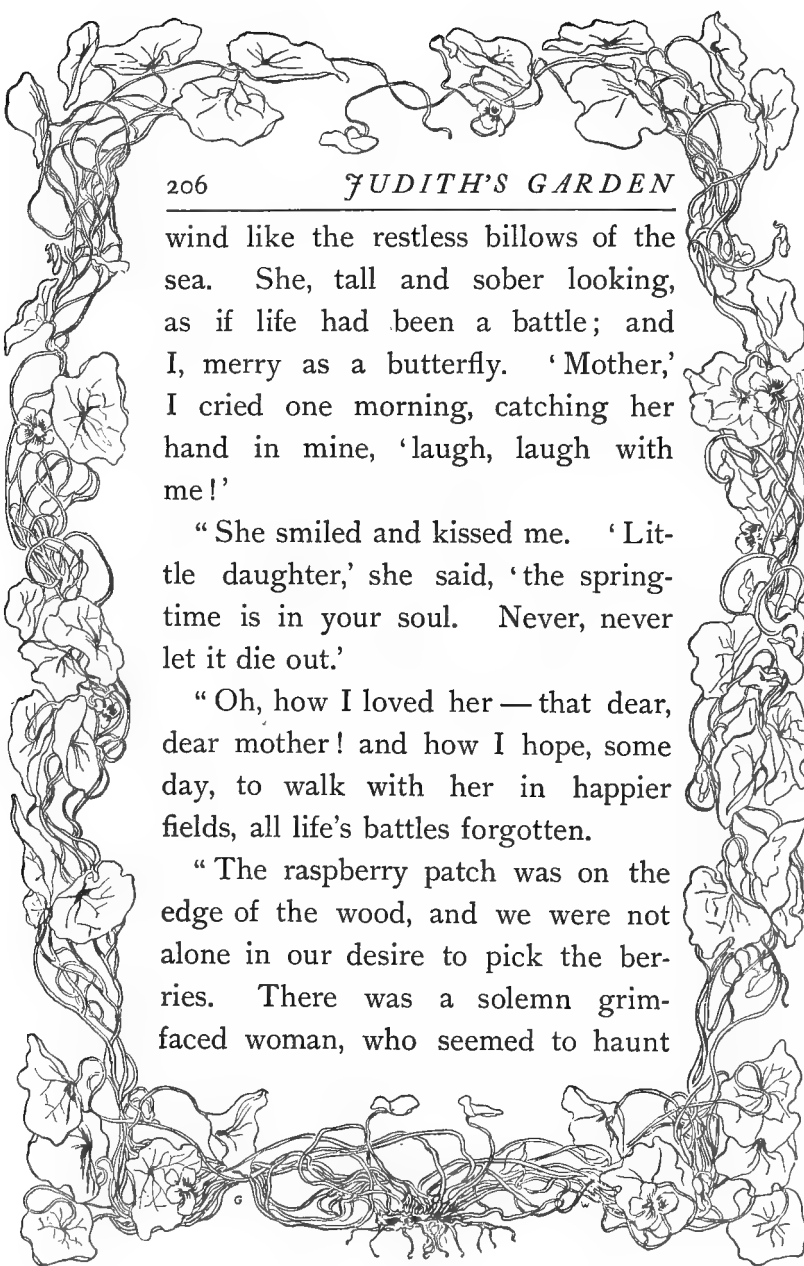
stone fence in the pasture lot. You could smell them as you walked through the lane. Nights, when I would get home from school (the same little schoolhouse, dear, of so many childhoods), I used to take a tiny pail and go down to the pasture to pick berries. I can see myself now—a little figure in a print gown and pink sunbonnet, kneeling beside the stone wall, carefully lifting the prickly bushes so as to find the very ripest red berries that grew in the shade.

“When I had picked my pail full I would hurry home; there procuring a bowl of fresh milk, I would crumb a slice of bread into it, and, carefully sorting my berries, drop them one by one into the mixture.



“Nectar and ambrosia, dear, that
repast of berries and milk; sitting on
our back door-step, where the soft
wind blew my curls, where I could
look down the valley for miles,
viewing almost the whole world, as
it seemed to me.

“Then the summer mornings, when
my mother and I went for red rasp-
berries in the north woods! Shall I
ever forget them, those fresh, dewy
dawns? for we always started very
early, the old dog barking gaily
about us and the thrushes trilling in
the wood. I can smell again the
mint along the brook-side, and see the
Joe-Pye weed budding near the bridge.
On we went, mother and I, past the
buckwheat field, white as snow; past
the grain field, waving in the fresh

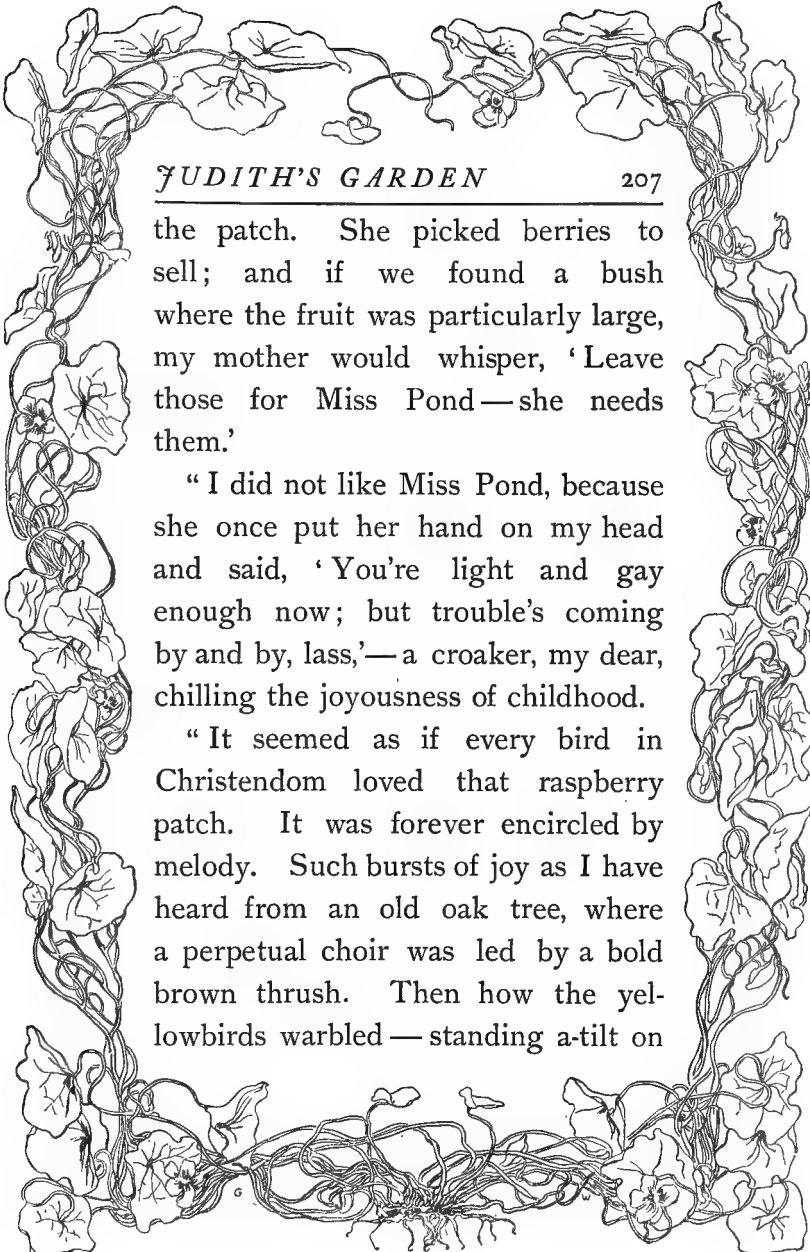


wind like the restless billows of the sea. She, tall and sober looking, as if life had been a battle; and I, merry as a butterfly. 'Mother,' I cried one morning, catching her hand in mine, 'laugh, laugh with me!'

"She smiled and kissed me. 'Little daughter,' she said, 'the spring-time is in your soul. Never, never let it die out.'

"Oh, how I loved her — that dear, dear mother! and how I hope, some day, to walk with her in happier fields, all life's battles forgotten.

"The raspberry patch was on the edge of the wood, and we were not alone in our desire to pick the berries. There was a solemn grim-faced woman, who seemed to haunt



the patch. She picked berries to sell; and if we found a bush where the fruit was particularly large, my mother would whisper, 'Leave those for Miss Pond—she needs them.'

"I did not like Miss Pond, because she once put her hand on my head and said, 'You're light and gay enough now; but trouble's coming by and by, lass,'—a croaker, my dear, chilling the joyousness of childhood.

"It seemed as if every bird in Christendom loved that raspberry patch. It was forever encircled by melody. Such bursts of joy as I have heard from an old oak tree, where a perpetual choir was led by a bold brown thrush. Then how the yellowbirds warbled—standing a-tilt on

the tall Canada thistles, telling us in merry strophes that raspberries were 'ripe, ripe, ripe!'

"When the sun had brushed the dew from the grass and it began to grow hot, we would withdraw into the shadow of the wood. Here was a chattering brook, all bordered with raspberry bushes. In its cool depths I used to walk, barefooted, to reach the moist red berries that overhung the steep banks. But enough, dear, of those days."

After lunch we sauntered down to the little stream at the foot of the garden. We paused on the grey old foot-bridge to watch the sparkling water and the shoals of silvery minnows darting here and there. Presently the old temptation came to me

— to wade down to the colony of blue flags.

I turned to my friend: "Pat has gone," I remarked, "to the far away meadow by the lake for a load of black dirt; he won't be back for an hour or more. There isn't a soul around. Would you, I ask, would you dare to wade in the brook?"

She looked at me smilingly. "Are you very, very sure there is not a man about, somewhere?"

"Not one," I said positively; "and we can hide our shoes and stockings under the stringer to the bridge."

"Then," said she, laughing, "as Pat would say, 'I'm wid yese.'"

We quickly divested ourselves of footgear and, lifting our skirts free from the water, two foolish, light-

hearted women paddled down the shallow little stream to the village of sweet flag.

Oh, it was such fun! (Try it yourself some fine day.) In places the stones were slippery and the water gurgled over them in little leaps. Once my friend nearly lost her balance, but half choking with laughter, I caught her and saved her a drenching.

"Do you know," I said, glancing over my shoulder, "it is just as much fun as it used to be."

"More," she said merrily, "for now it is a stolen pleasure."

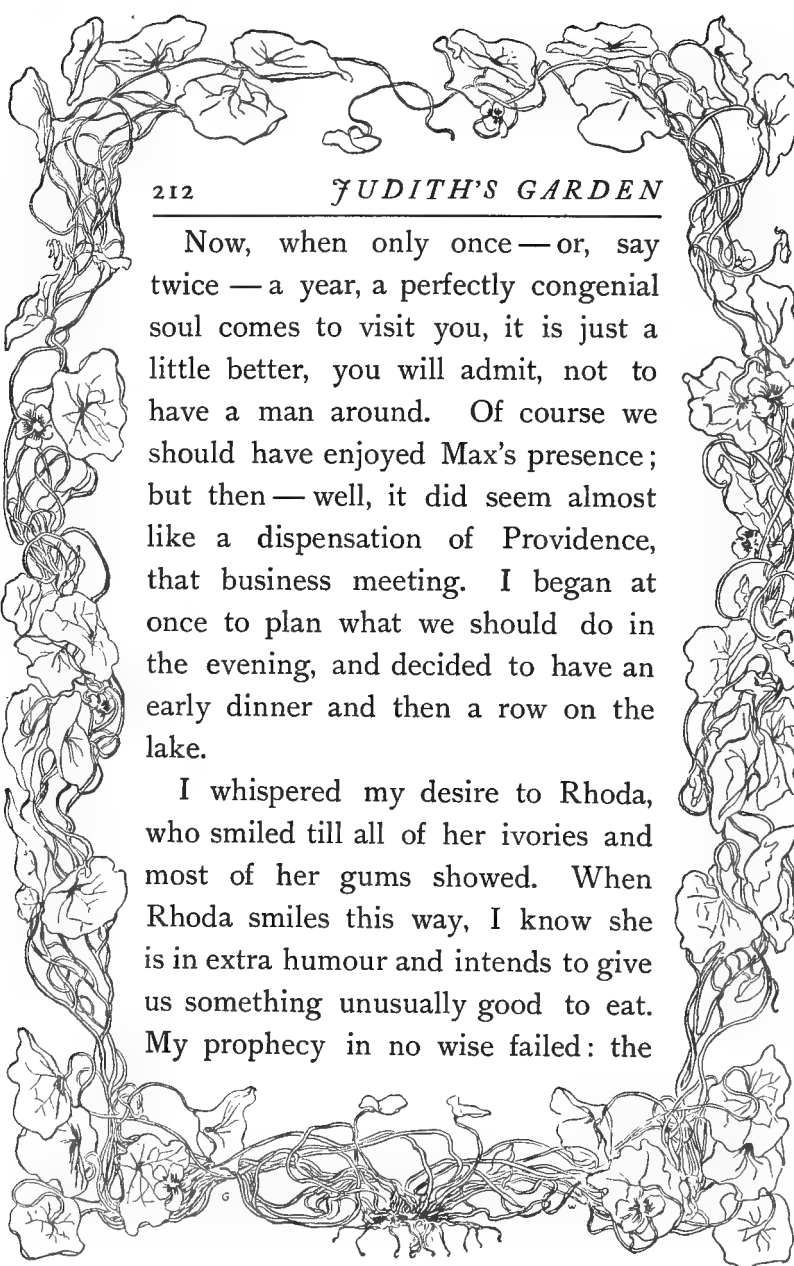
However, long before Pat returned we were properly arrayed and looked as dignified as usual. We wandered into the grove to watch the sunbeams stealing down the boles of the tall

trees. We did not talk much, for somehow, I always feel silent in the woods. We only sat with clasped hands, enjoying the quiet beauty of the scene.

How long we might have lingered I know not, there is such a fascination in watching the approach of sunset in the woods, but presently I saw Rhoda coming across the bridge with a note in her hand.

We went to meet her, and I found that the note was from Max.

He wrote he was sorry, but he could not be home to dinner. There was a certain meeting of stockholders that he must attend. I was not to sit up for him, for he might be rather late returning; but as the night was sure to be fine and the moon was full, the ride out would be delightful.



Now, when only once—or, say twice—a year, a perfectly congenial soul comes to visit you, it is just a little better, you will admit, not to have a man around. Of course we should have enjoyed Max's presence; but then—well, it did seem almost like a dispensation of Providence, that business meeting. I began at once to plan what we should do in the evening, and decided to have an early dinner and then a row on the lake.

I whispered my desire to Rhoda, who smiled till all of her ivories and most of her gums showed. When Rhoda smiles this way, I know she is in extra humour and intends to give us something unusually good to eat. My prophecy in no wise failed: the

dinner that she served us was fully up to the reputation she claims for herself, of having been "cook in one ob de fust famblys in de Souf."

Shall I ever forget that evening on the lake? Ah, no; there are hours in our lives too precious to be forgotten. The full moon ploughed the water in a great golden furrow, and into this effulgence we rowed, she and I, alone,—the dear soul who thinks as I do, who loves nature in the same worshipful fashion.

I shipped my oars and, rocking on the idle waves, time slipped by unheeded.

If you really knew her, I should not dare to relate the story she told me that night, lest it grieve her. But you cannot find her among the mil-

lions of women God has sent to grace the earth; and many of you will deem this tale but a fantastic idea of my own.

I had been telling her how much I loved the green earth, and how I trusted in that infinite Power whose thought was manifest all about us. "Oh," I said, "this is my joyful summer — my season of happiness."

She dipped her slender hand in the water and tossed it up in sparkling drops. She is always fair to look at, but to-night, in a simple white mull gown ("My one change," she had laughingly told me, as she took it out of her satchel; "because you see, dear, it can be laundered in every town"), she appeared in the soft moonlight truly spiritual.

"You do well to trust," she said gently; "it will make your life calm and happy, and you will draw to yourself, out of the great invisible world around you, forces that make for peace."

I knew she had some secret fount of trust; else, how could she always be so blithe, so sure of good?

"Dear," I said at last, "there is no one here but you and me, and our hearts are very close together. Tell me what it is you have found, that I, too, may seek."

"How can I tell you?" she said, shifting a little in her seat. "You may not believe me; still, what does that matter? Be it dream or reality, it is very sweet to me."

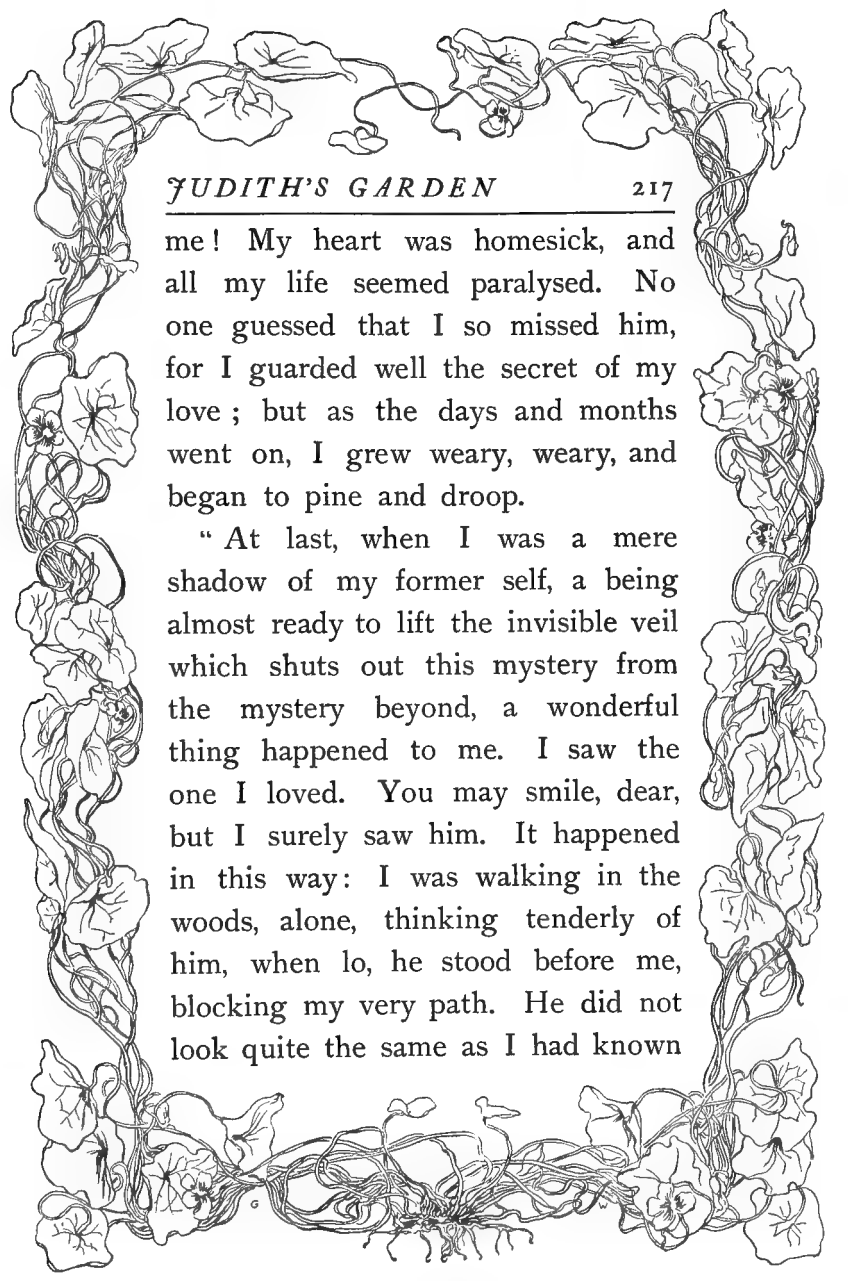
I hope I have tact enough to

know when to remain silent. I simply waited.

"Is not life like a dream to-night," she continued softly,—"this great shadowy lake, yonder shining moon, those mysterious stars? How can I tell if they be real or unreal?—so seems my dream.

"Away back in my life, dear, I loved some one very dearly; and I think he loved me. He never told me so in words; but there are many ways spirit speaks to spirit, and his eyes were always tell-tales. Whenever they rested upon me, I did not need to be told the secret of a heart.

"One day he went away—very suddenly; far away, like so many of our loved ones, never to return. Oh, how lonely he left the world for



me! My heart was homesick, and all my life seemed paralysed. No one guessed that I so missed him, for I guarded well the secret of my love; but as the days and months went on, I grew weary, weary, and began to pine and droop.

"At last, when I was a mere shadow of my former self, a being almost ready to lift the invisible veil which shuts out this mystery from the mystery beyond, a wonderful thing happened to me. I saw the one I loved. You may smile, dear, but I surely saw him. It happened in this way: I was walking in the woods, alone, thinking tenderly of him, when lo, he stood before me, blocking my very path. He did not look quite the same as I had known

him in life, but younger and more vigorous. His dress was different. It was a grey robe, draped in classic fold about his stately form and well became him. I knew him by his smile,—the same swift, tender smile that had always won me.

“‘Come, dear,’ he said very gently, ‘let us build us a home over there.’

“I smiled, for I thought he had come to take me away, and I wondered how I had ever feared death, now that he was near.

“‘I am ready,’ I cried joyfully.

“‘Do you think,’ he said slowly, ‘it is so easy to die? Your young body is meant for life; it will be many years before you will leave this earth; but do you not know that the spirit is capable of a dual

life? Live that life. There is no real joy outside of spiritual things. Come, let us build us a home.'

"I little guessed what he meant then, I was so filled with wonder, so dazed with joy. I felt the returning strength of a hundred women. If there were no power, even in death, to separate my spirit from his, what had I to fear?

"He read my thought and answered it: 'Nothing to fear, dear,' he said; 'absolutely nothing. All our fears are but bugaboos fashioned for us by our ancestors. To die is to fall asleep, to awake to a better life. There is only one thing to be careful about, and that is your character. You must build it firmly, as it tells for all eternity.'

“‘What can I do to build aright?’
I asked.

“‘See good everywhere,’ he replied. ‘Never see evil. It may exist, but pass it by. In seeing good, peace will come and abide with you; you will grow to trust, and with peace and trust for companions, what more can one ask?’

“He turned to go, but I sought to stay him. ‘How can we build that home over there?’ I entreated.

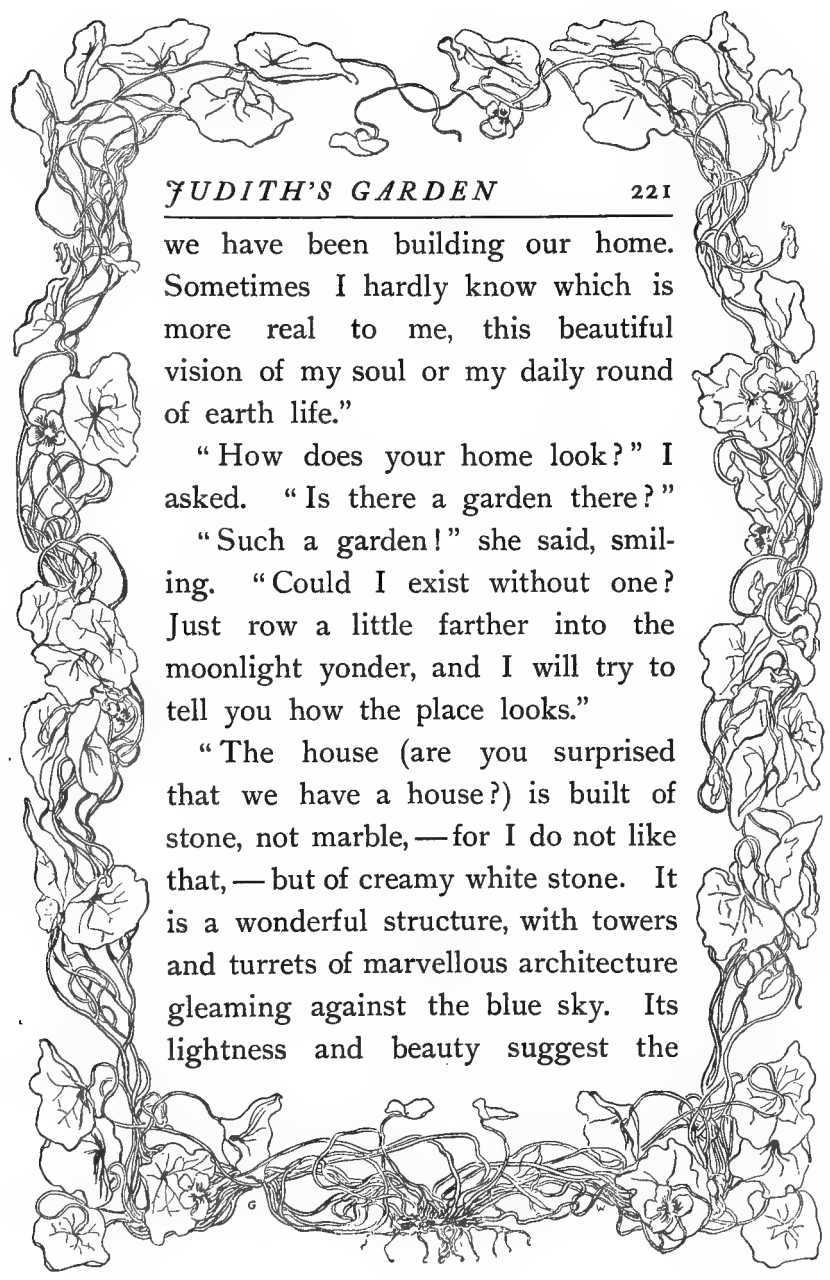
“‘You shall know,’ he said.

“He was gone and I —”

There was silence.

“Oh, do not stop there, dearest,” I pleaded; “please, please to go on!”

“There is not much more to tell,” she said; “but from that day to this

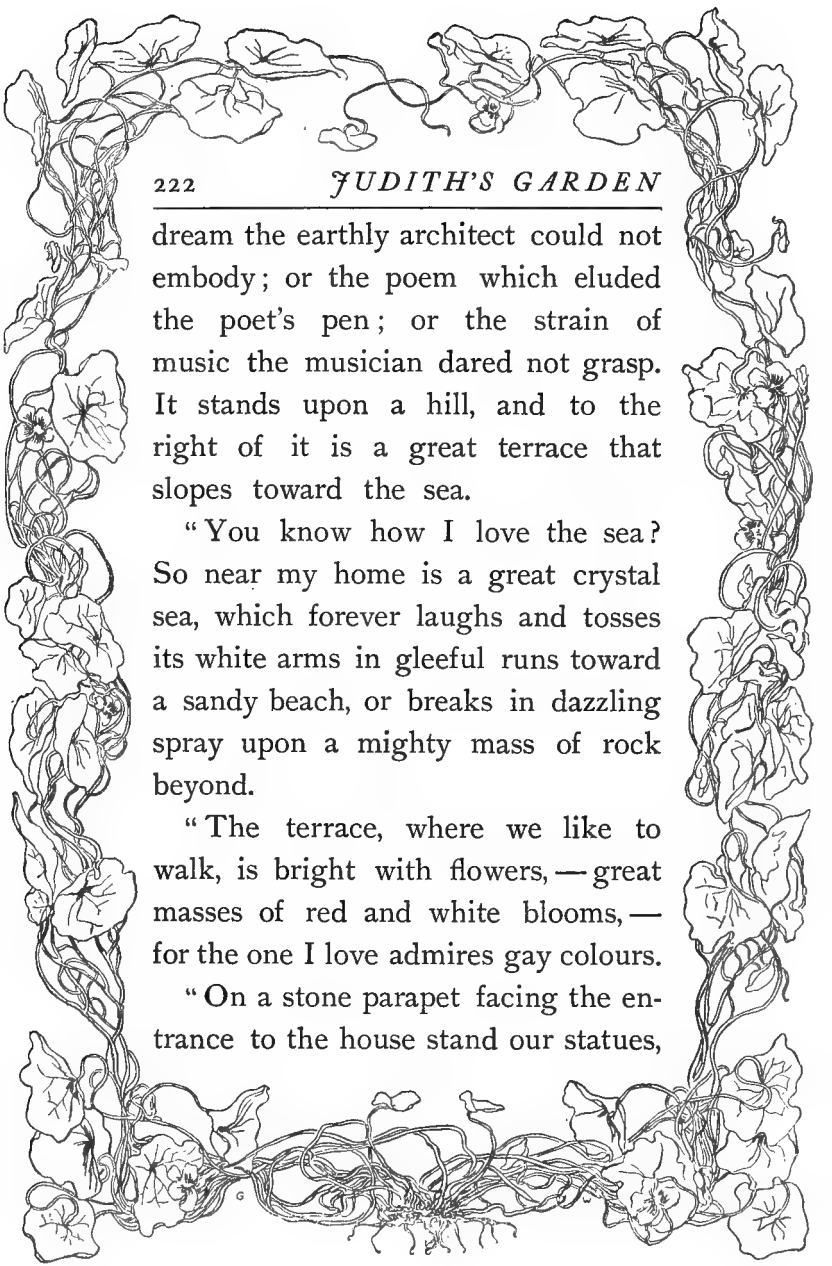


we have been building our home. Sometimes I hardly know which is more real to me, this beautiful vision of my soul or my daily round of earth life."

"How does your home look?" I asked. "Is there a garden there?"

"Such a garden!" she said, smiling. "Could I exist without one? Just row a little farther into the moonlight yonder, and I will try to tell you how the place looks."

"The house (are you surprised that we have a house?) is built of stone, not marble,—for I do not like that,—but of creamy white stone. It is a wonderful structure, with towers and turrets of marvellous architecture gleaming against the blue sky. Its lightness and beauty suggest the

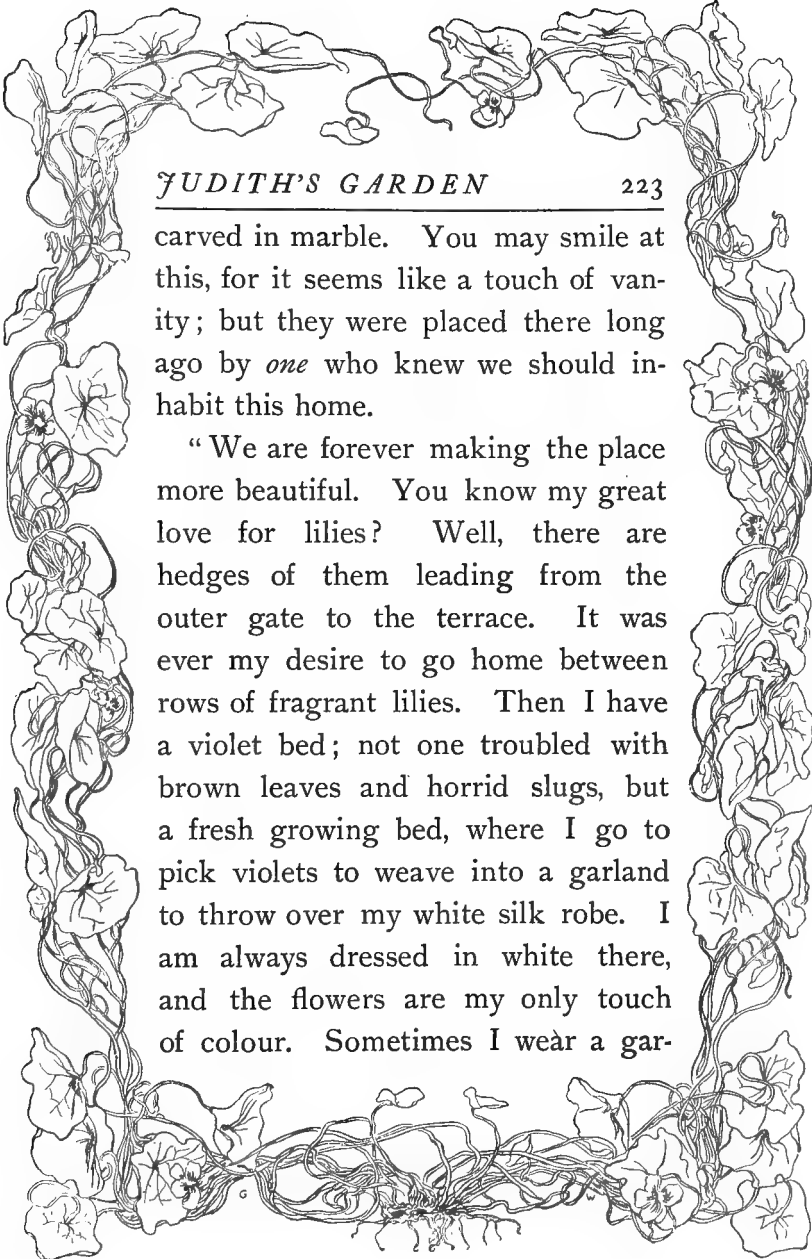


dream the earthly architect could not embody; or the poem which eluded the poet's pen; or the strain of music the musician dared not grasp. It stands upon a hill, and to the right of it is a great terrace that slopes toward the sea.

"You know how I love the sea? So near my home is a great crystal sea, which forever laughs and tosses its white arms in gleeful runs toward a sandy beach, or breaks in dazzling spray upon a mighty mass of rock beyond.

"The terrace, where we like to walk, is bright with flowers,—great masses of red and white blooms,—for the one I love admires gay colours.

"On a stone parapet facing the entrance to the house stand our statues,



carved in marble. You may smile at this, for it seems like a touch of vanity; but they were placed there long ago by *one* who knew we should inhabit this home.

“We are forever making the place more beautiful. You know my great love for lilies? Well, there are hedges of them leading from the outer gate to the terrace. It was ever my desire to go home between rows of fragrant lilies. Then I have a violet bed; not one troubled with brown leaves and horrid slugs, but a fresh growing bed, where I go to pick violets to weave into a garland to throw over my white silk robe. I am always dressed in white there, and the flowers are my only touch of colour. Sometimes I wear a gar-

land of pink roses, or more often one of red roses, to please the one I love.

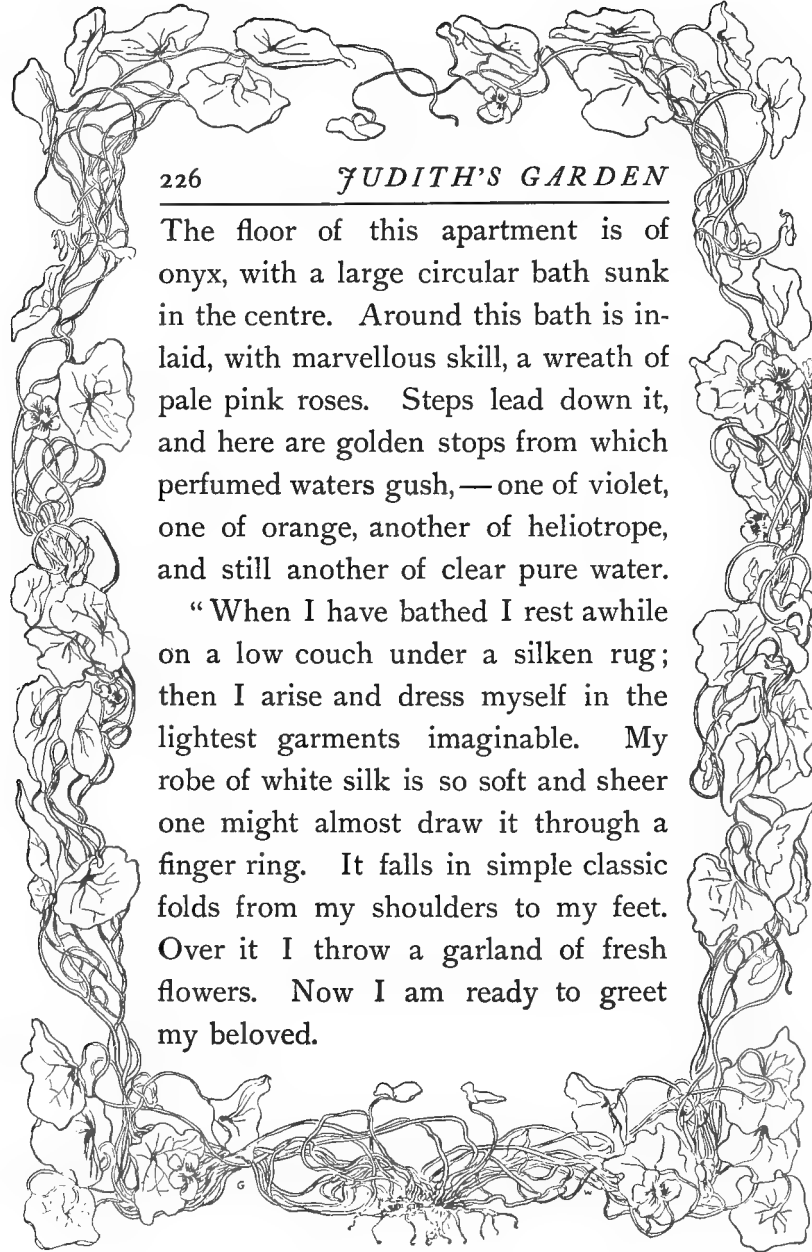
"I must not forget to tell you of the fountain on the lawn. It is an exquisite piece of work, executed by a friend, an earnest disciple of art. It represents a beautiful fay disporting in the water. All round its basin we have planted rows and rows of rainbow-hued iris. They are in blossom now. Oh, how they shine in the sunlight!" She clasped her hands as if she really saw them.

"In our home," she continued, "is a little room called the 'Peace Room.' It is hung round with tapestries, the scenes representing trees and quiet fields. Here I always go to rest when weary of earthly strife. In this still,

happy spot I forget my annoyances and fears.

“After I am quite refreshed I seek the bath; for, dear, the spirit must ever wash away the soil of earth.

“My way leads down a long sunny gallery, with arches gaily festooned with flowering vines, until I reach a little door at the right. This leads into my private bath; and, dear, no Pompeian maid ever stepped into a finer one, though I designed it all myself. It is a circular room, with a vaulted roof of deeply crimson glass. The walls are hung with tapestries, the scene, this time, representing a path through the forest. There is not a sign of life in the picture, just the winding path through the trees, fading at last in a vague golden vista.



The floor of this apartment is of onyx, with a large circular bath sunk in the centre. Around this bath is inlaid, with marvellous skill, a wreath of pale pink roses. Steps lead down it, and here are golden stops from which perfumed waters gush, — one of violet, one of orange, another of heliotrope, and still another of clear pure water.

“When I have bathed I rest awhile on a low couch under a silken rug; then I arise and dress myself in the lightest garments imaginable. My robe of white silk is so soft and sheer one might almost draw it through a finger ring. It falls in simple classic folds from my shoulders to my feet. Over it I throw a garland of fresh flowers. Now I am ready to greet my beloved.

“Joyfully I hasten back through the long gallery and out upon the great terrace. Have you ever come suddenly upon the one you most love and felt your heart leap? ‘Oh,’ I think, ‘how can I tell him of my great love? how can I make him understand?’ In curious trepidation I pause, as timid as Esther, and stand with drooping head, idly toying with my garland of flowers.

“Shall I find favour in his eyes? I hear his step upon the terrace. I look up and behold his kingly presence.

“‘Come,’ he calls in the tenderest of voices, ‘come, little love, my other soul, your home is here on my breast!’

“I fly into those outstretched arms;

our lips meet. What else is there to wish for? I have found heaven."

I waited breathless a moment.

"There is no more," she said.

I turned the boat and rowed through the long swale of moonlight back to the mouth of the river; there I peered at her from under one hand.

"You must be crazy," I remarked.

"You think so?" she returned. "I scarcely expected that from you. Did you not tell me once you believed in occult forces?"

"Did I?" I returned evasively.

"Indeed you did," she said a little warmly. "What has changed your mind?"

"Oh, the dream; it is too good to be true."

"What?"

"I mean that garden without bugs."

"See here, little brown-top," she said quizzically, "I sha'n't tell you anything more."

All along the banks of the river the fire-flies were gleaming in the shrubbery,—little bright evasive lamps lighting the darkness for an instant and then lost to sight. The trees bend low over the water in some places, and now and then a limb touched our heads.

At last we reached the wharf and found Max awaiting us, his cigar gleaming like another fire-fly.

He greeted my friend cordially, but rebuked me. "You are out very late," he said.

"What time is it?" I inquired.

"Midnight."

I was truly astonished.

We sauntered up to the house, and still being very wide awake sat down in the little parlour to talk.

Presently there was a tap at the door. It opened, and Rhoda thrust in her woolly head.

"Look here, honey," she whispered; "dars some ice-cream lef in de freezer; shall I fotch it?"

Dear old Rhoda! she had sat up all this time just to please me.

"Oh, Rhoda," I said, telling a white fib to please her, "how good you are! I was just longing for something cool."

It was after two o'clock before we retired; then I stole away from Max and went to my friend's room.

"See here, dearest," I said, perching

myself like a white ghost at the head of her bed, "I've come to be forgiven. I want to tell you — I feel I know so little, oh, so little, about this great universe or the possibilities of God, that after all, your dream may be true."



A
DELIGHTFUL XV
MORNING

 *S* the stage-coach rolled away next morning, I was feeling very lonely. It contained my friend, and her visit had been far too short.

Suddenly I remembered hosts of things I had wished to tell her — and all so important! I nearly ran to bid the coach stop; but it disappeared over the hill, and two tears — the first I have shed this summer — ran down my cheeks. I turned and walked

slowly toward the house. Halfway up the path Pat called to me.

"Missus," he said, peeking at me through a tangle of shrubs, "coom quick; for, bedad! I've found the faither o' roses! Shure, 'tis tin inches across thot bloom! I've bin waitin' to tell ye;" and his little eyes looked quite excited.

"Not so large as that, Pat; it can't be possible. Just wait till I run in for the tape measure, then we'll know for sure."

In the rose garden Pat and I measured a great Magna Charta and found it to be just six inches across.

"Bedad, 'tis a beauty!" remarked Pat. "The flowers in this garden air growin' grand. Wait till I've measured a hollyhock."

We followed the path to the hedge of hollyhocks — glowing pink, crimson, and yellow — and found a giant that measured five inches across.

By this time I was growing quite excited; a mania for measuring was on me. I hunted out the finest nasturtium and found it two and a half inches across. A tall delphinium caught my eyes; its stalk was just three feet high. Quite regardless of Pat, who, seeing me pacified, was now busily weeding, I went through the whole garden and measured without stint.

Just as I was drawing the tape taut across a big sunflower, a soft voice, close by me, said, "Good-morning, Mrs. Elliot."

I turned quickly and beheld Priscilla Brown.

She stood beside a tall shrub, its umbrageous foliage making a charming background for her quaint figure. In one hand was a little basket holding a strange-looking plant.

I suppose I stared at her; I usually do stare at things when they are so pretty. Miss Priscilla was dressed in a pale sage-green gown, its scant skirt not quite reaching below her dainty feet. But the simple waist had a yoke of sheer white lace, with a full fichu of rosy gauze draped low on the shoulders. She wore a sage-green bonnet, with a long pink plume, and a wreath of roses under the brim. It framed the sweetest, fairest face in the world.

I guessed at once that this queer costume had belonged to mamma of histrionic fame; but it was none the less becoming.

"Father bade me fetch you this plant," she continued. "He found it growing in the cranny of a rock. He thinks it is a very rare orchid; and he also wished me to ask you if you are troubled with bugs on potatoes? He has just invented an insect exterminator."

"Excuse me one moment," I said, and I jotted down the diameter of my sunflower.

"Are you measuring them," asked Miss Priscilla, "in order to estimate how much seed there will be for the hens?"

"No," I said frankly; "I have only

one fowl and I wish he were dead. I was just measuring the flowers for fun. I do a great deal for fun's sake."

She said nothing, but toyed with the end of her fichu.

"Your father ought to be apotheosised," I said softly.

"Why?" she asked.

"I was thinking of that 'insect exterminator.' Are you sure it is bound to kill?"

"Oh, yes," she answered brightly; "father says it is a perfect success. He was working yesterday in our potato patch. It gathered three quarts of potato bugs; very nicely, too."

"I don't raise potatoes," I said a little grimly. "Do you think it will kill off the aphids, the red spider, or

the mealy bug? Can it catch an aster beetle?"

"I don't know," she answered laughingly; "you will have to ask father."

"Your father is fond of inventing?" I said, not a little curiously.

A proud, tender look shone in her face. "Yes, indeed," she replied, "father is wonderful. He is now at work on his last and greatest invention."

"What is it? if I may ask."

She leaned a little closer to me. "We don't talk much about it," she said, "but I know it will do no harm to tell you. It is an air-ship, and it is almost perfected; only one little thing eludes father, then the problem of aerial navigation will be solved."

"How interesting!" I said excitedly.

What further secrets she might have disclosed were interrupted by Pat coming down the path. I called to him.

"Pat, here is a plant Mr. Brown has kindly sent me."

He doffed his hat to Priscilla, then lifted the plant curiously.

"Phwat is it?" he inquired.

"Father thinks it is an orchid," replied Priscilla.

"Shure, thin," said Pat, "'tis one o' poor Hitty Allen's plants. It wandered off, I sushpect, an' hid itself in a rock. Shall I plant it on a shtick?"

"You know best, Pat," I answered cheerfully; for whenever I feel in doubt about anything, I leave it to him.

He was going away, with the plant held tenderly in one knotty hand, when Miss Priscilla stopped him.

"Did you know Miss Allen?" she asked.

"Hoo!" cried Pat, "did I know me own fambly? Miss Allen an' me wor frinds afore ye wor born, miss."

"Won't you tell me, please, about the orchids that grew in the old glass house in our garden?"

"Is the house still there?" I asked.

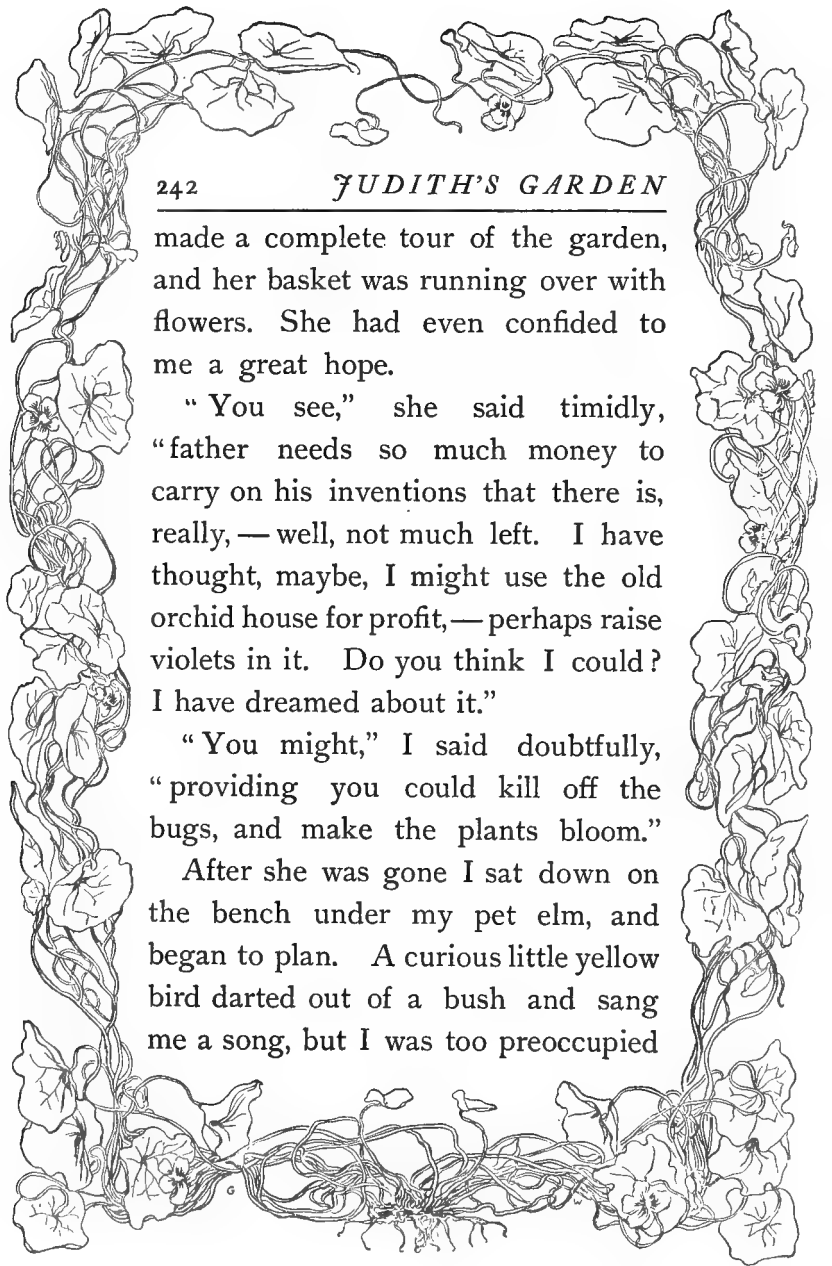
"To be sure. Belinda shuts the hens in it every night."

"Arrah, 'tis a hin-house now," groaned Pat, "an' I remimbers the toime 'twor full o' orchards. 'Twor a foine sight! Sum o' thim shtick plants looked loike snakes, an' had flowers as red as blood a-drippin'

frum 'em. Sum were freckled all over loike a schoolboy ; an' sum were white as snow. All, all growin' out o' shticks, unco' loike. Bad cess to 'em ! Shure, they druv Hitty Allen out o' her head ; she wint daft o'er 'em. 'Twor an ould uncle — may the divil fly away wid him ! — as sint her the first plant frum Africay. She wor contint enuf afor wid airthly flowers, but that orchard clean knocked the sinse out o' her ; 'twor the ruin o' Hitty Allen."

He sidled up to me. "Sure, missus," he whispered, "shall I be after plantin' this on a shtick, or shall I duck it in the brook ?"

My wish to become acquainted with Priscilla Brown was gratified. Before she left me that morning we had



made a complete tour of the garden, and her basket was running over with flowers. She had even confided to me a great hope.

"You see," she said timidly, "father needs so much money to carry on his inventions that there is, really, — well, not much left. I have thought, maybe, I might use the old orchid house for profit, — perhaps raise violets in it. Do you think I could? I have dreamed about it."

"You might," I said doubtfully, "providing you could kill off the bugs, and make the plants bloom."

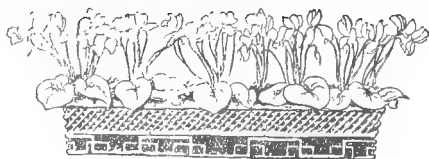
After she was gone I sat down on the bench under my pet elm, and began to plan. A curious little yellow bird darted out of a bush and sang me a song, but I was too preoccupied

to pay him much attention. I was busily calculating: if Priscilla Brown had so many plants, and each plant bore so many violets, and the market price of violets was so and so, she could make a certain sum of money the first year. The second year the plants would double so many times, and each plant would bear so many violets, and the market price of violets would be — Why, Priscilla Brown would get rich. Just think of it — rich! Then, why could I not marry her to the man who loved flowers?

“Ain’ you’s comin’ to lunch, honey?”

“Lunch!” I cried. “Can it be so late? Where has the morning gone? In a minute, Rhoda.”

I went back to the house musing. My friend had gone, and how little I had missed her! I had passed a most delightful half-day, measuring flowers, talking to Priscilla Brown, and (mentally) raising violets. I felt so very cheerful that I half reproached myself; yet how could I help it? — the sun was shining and the sky was blue. Old Mother Nature was rejoicing; and why not her own dear daughter? Let me be glad.



I
INTRODUCE *XVI*
A RELATIVE



I *HAVE* an aunt. I should not mention her, for most people possess aunts, only she is somewhat eccentric; and I being her only living relative on my father's side, she naturally takes a great interest in me. I worry her some — poor lady! she feels that in certain ways I am not a properly constructed person.

My aunt is rich. Her late husband left her a large fortune; and

being childless, she has fixed upon me as her heir. It has not disturbed me much, for she is yet scarce sixty, and I had a great-grandmother who lived to be ninety-six; then, again, I like my aunt and had just as soon she would live as not.

To-day I received a letter from her and a gift — a check for one hundred dollars. She wrote:—

“MY DEAR JUDITH: I hear you are living in the country, and I suppose running out-of-doors at all hours with nothing on your head. Do you not know, dear child, such actions will ruin your complexion? That lost, what else have you to fall back upon?

“I hope you have a pair of good

garden-gloves. I feel very sure that your clothes are not in proper repair. Do not think so much about flowers, but more of your husband's welfare and your own personal appearance. I enclose a check. Take this money and buy yourself suitable attire; knowing you so well, I feel certain you have sowed and planted all your summer frocks.

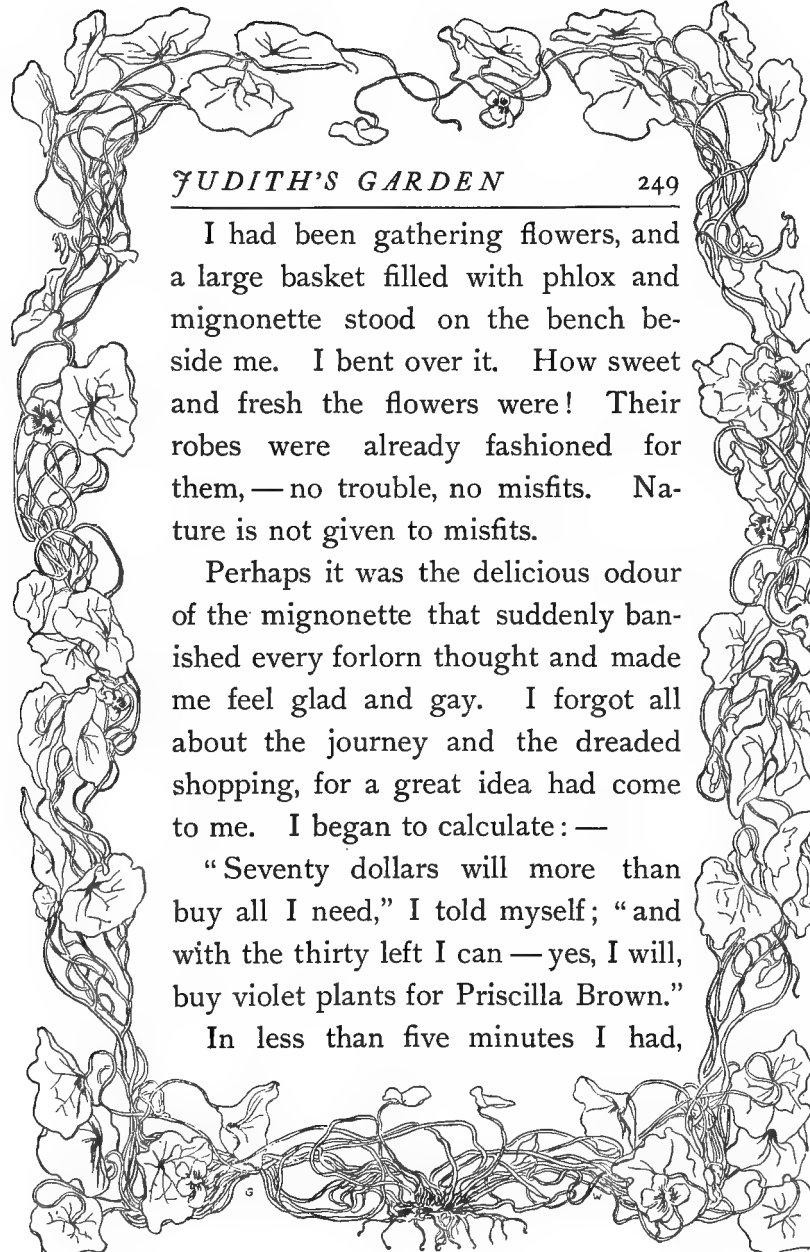
"In your last letter you talked of nothing but your garden and the plants therein. Dear child, you never mentioned your own husband's name. Is he not more to you than all the vegetation in the world? Do you not realise how serious life is—its grave responsibilities? I fear your soul is set to earthly things—such as gardens. But I will not scold you, for I

love you dearly — my only brother's only child!

“Remember your complexion; hasten to buy the gloves. Take the money I send you and make yourself presentable in your husband's eye. Think serious thoughts. With heart-felt affection, I am, my dear niece, your own

“AUNT MATILDA.”

I looked at the check, and a real kindly smile tilted the corners of my mouth; but it vanished when I thought of the tiresome journey to the city in search of wearing apparel, then the trials with dressmakers. I almost wished Aunt Matilda had kept her money; in that case I could have stayed at home and worn my old frocks in peace.



I had been gathering flowers, and a large basket filled with phlox and mignonette stood on the bench beside me. I bent over it. How sweet and fresh the flowers were! Their robes were already fashioned for them,—no trouble, no misfits. Nature is not given to misfits.

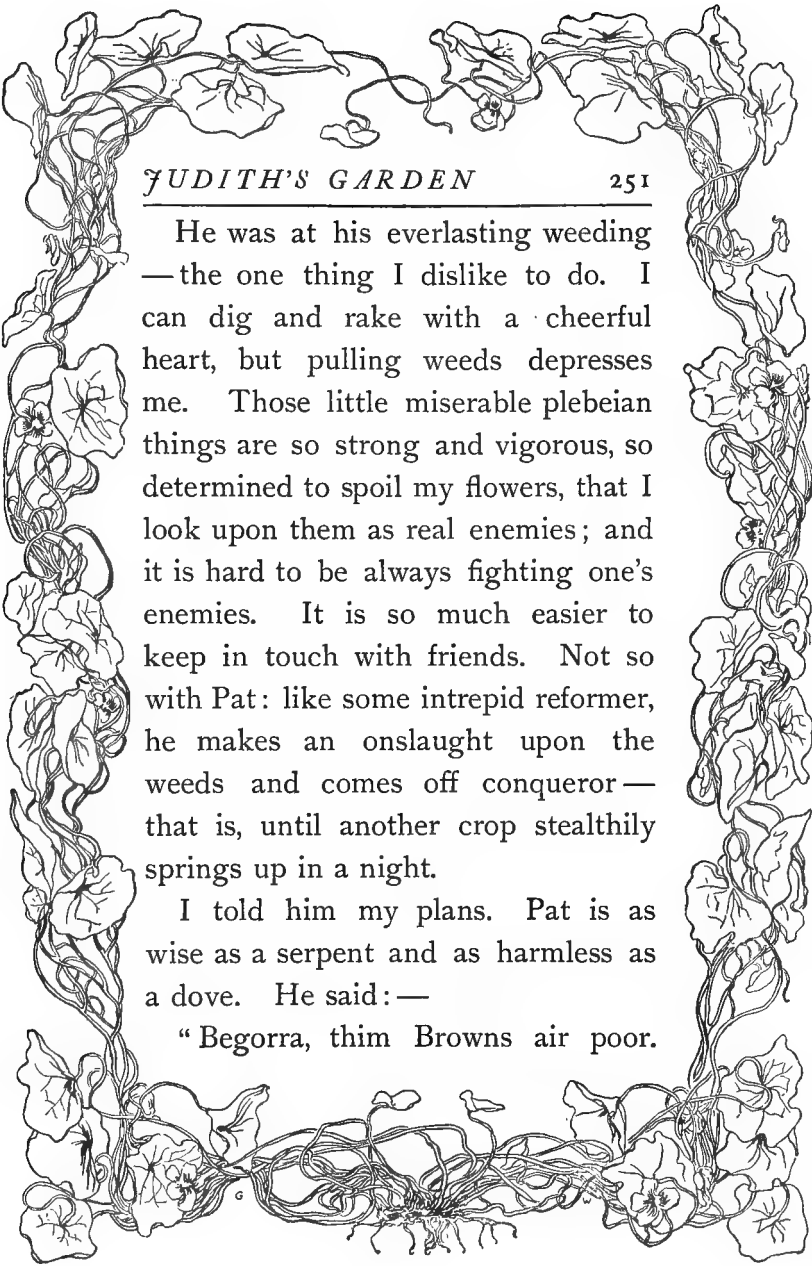
Perhaps it was the delicious odour of the mignonette that suddenly banished every forlorn thought and made me feel glad and gay. I forgot all about the journey and the dreaded shopping, for a great idea had come to me. I began to calculate:—

“Seventy dollars will more than buy all I need,” I told myself; “and with the thirty left I can—yes, I will, buy violet plants for Priscilla Brown.”

In less than five minutes I had,

mentally, scuttled every hen out of the old orchid house, replaced its broken panes, and set out two long rows of healthy, vigorous plants,—all sending up violets of such size and growth as may bloom in spirit world but I fear were never seen on this mundane sphere.

I was just about running to confide in Pat, when a thought deterred me: "It was not likely that Priscilla Brown would receive such a gift from me." Plainly, Mr. Electrical Brown was a gentleman; and would a gentleman allow his daughter to accept an act of charity? Yet how could I relinquish this delightful idea? The more I thought of those violets, the more my spirit soared. It must be managed. I sought Pat.



He was at his everlasting weeding — the one thing I dislike to do. I can dig and rake with a cheerful heart, but pulling weeds depresses me. Those little miserable plebeian things are so strong and vigorous, so determined to spoil my flowers, that I look upon them as real enemies; and it is hard to be always fighting one's enemies. It is so much easier to keep in touch with friends. Not so with Pat: like some intrepid reformer, he makes an onslaught upon the weeds and comes off conqueror — that is, until another crop stealthily springs up in a night.

I told him my plans. Pat is as wise as a serpent and as harmless as a dove. He said: —

“Begorra, thim Browns air poor.

The ould gintleman is a thrifle touched. I've heerd he'd tak' the bread out o' their mouths to git money to invint sumthin; but shure, he's no common sort. As ye say, 'tis best to be on the sacret. I'll manage thot. An' is the moon full?"

"It is," I replied.

"Thin I'll stale over this very noight an' measure the sash in the ould orchard house; 'twill nade sum new glass."

"What a good idea," I said; "then you can buy the glass at the village store for me; and, Pat, some other bright night you can steal over and put it in. We must be very secret."

"Shure, shure," said Pat.

I took the noon stage en route for the city. I knew if I stopped to con-

sider, I should disobey Aunt Matilda. Next day I returned, hot and wrathful, but triumphant. I had made several purchases; one of my packages was as tall as myself. This I placed carefully away in the spare room, ready for future use.

I had heard in town a rumour that Mr. Tom Norton talked of coming home. Supposing that this rumour were true, and he should want his paradise — my paradise — back again? The thought filled me with dismay. Perhaps next summer the spring all edged with daffodils and tall ferns would be his. My roses would bloom for him, and all the morning-glories — no, it was a great comfort to me to think the morning-glories would not come up, nor the stock with its

heavy racemes of tinted flowers. Oh, how could I bear to lose what seemed so like my own! I threw aside my bonnet, and quite forgetful of my complexion, ran through the cool paths of my dear garden, my Eden on earth!

It was one of those lovely afternoons when there is just enough wind to set the flowers bowing and the white clouds sailing through the blue sky. An afternoon when the brown thrush's flutelike note is heard in the grove, and the air is cool and balmy. One cannot be unhappy long, especially in a garden. In less than five minutes my mood had changed. I mentally counted all the intervening months between this and next spring, and my habitual be-

lief in good luck came to aid me. "Doubts are ill-omened," I thought; "it is far better to trust in luck, far better to trust in everything that you most desire, and never, never to doubt the good."

You are welcome to this advice.

I felt like a pilgrim returned to my own. If it were not so ungenteel I should have skipped down the paths; as it was, I went behind a big evergreen and jumped about some, just to be rid of a superabundance of joy. I can't tell you what makes me so happy when I see green things growing; but I know I feel like the brown thrush, ready to burst with praise.

At length I found Pat, but my gardener looked a little glum.

"Did you measure the sash in the orchid house?" I asked.

Pat leaned on his hoe, and a look of disgust, half whimsical and half real, came into his face.

"Bedad," says he, "I wasn't let."

"What happened?"

"I'll tell ye: last noight I wint over, an' whin all was still about the Brown premises, I shtole into the garden an' cloimed to the ruf of the ould orchard house; thin I whipped out me measure, an' jest as I was measuring good, bedad! thot limb o' Satan called to me.

"I looked doon, an' thar she stood in the moonlight, wid a gun p'inted strate at me.

"Ses she, 'Coom doon out o' thot agin I shoot ye!'

“‘Whist!’ ses I.

“‘I’ll not whist,’ ses she, ‘coom doon or I’ll fire.’

“An’ bedad! I feared she wud; but I was not to be fashed by a woman.

“Ses I, ‘Hoold on.’

“Ses she, ‘I won’t hoold on. Ye’ve coom to stale me hins!’

“‘Divil tak’ yer ould hins!’ ses I. ‘I’ve coom to measure the orchard house,’ an’ in shpite o’ her, I whipped up me measure an’ got the size o’ a pane; thin I cloimed doon, fur shure, good Irishmen are skurse, an’ I didn’t know but she might tak’ a fit an’ the gun go off.

“Wall, I no sooner put me fate to the ground than she arter me. Be jabers! she chased me clane to the lake, the ould limb o’ Satan!”

"Didn't she recognise you, Pat?"

"Not a bit o' it. I kept me hat pulled doon o'er me face. Shure, ye know, wese planned to be sacret."

I laughed, but Pat looked so serious that I knew it was no joke to him.

"We must propitiate her, Pat," I said.

"Phwat may thot mane?"

"Win her over to our side."

"Shure, I'd thought o' thot. I've a head o' cabbage in me yard that's a monshter. 'Twill break me ould woman's heart to part wid it; but, be jabers! I'll pluck it an' presint it to the limb o' Satan. As ye say, it may pro-pitty-ate her; but, shure, if I had her gun I'd kape me cabbage."

*I FIND
A SUCCESSFUL
HIDING PLACE* **XVII**



HAVE two dress-makers in the house — sisters, by the name of Lark.

Meadow Larks I call them, for they look so hearty and full of good cheer. They are both spinsters and little given to the vanities of this world. They comb their hair back from their foreheads so tightly that I should think their eyes would ache, and they wear the plainest sort of dresses fashioned of dark print. I

like them; that is, I like them when I am in the garden and they are upstairs.

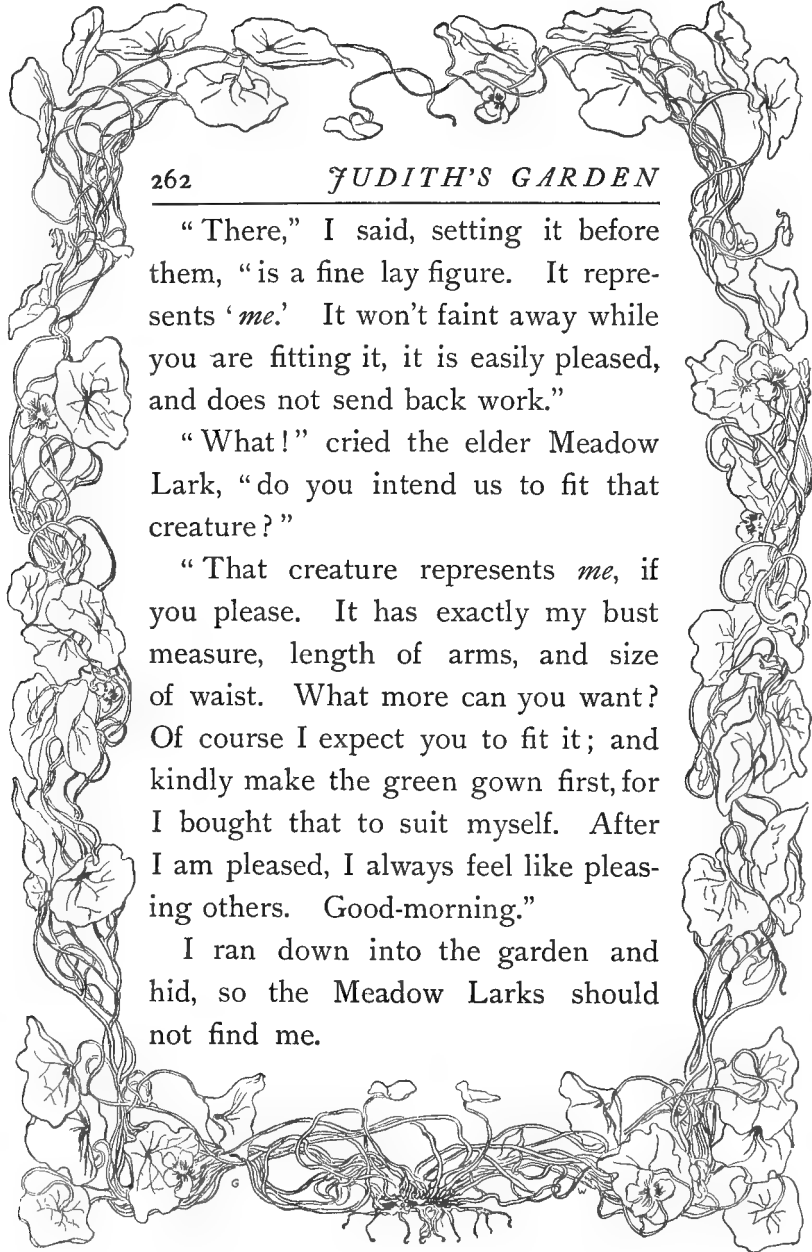
The first day they came I laid out all my purchases on the bed, — a white dress, a pink dress, and a green dress. The green dress I bought to please myself, the others, to please my husband, who, in spite of Aunt Matilda's hint, is more to me than any plant or vegetable that grows.

I know I shall feel so good in that dull green gown, so akin to growing things, that, perhaps, when dear old Mother Nature spies me she will know I am, in truth, one of her devoted daughters. When I walk amid the shrubbery I shall sink into it, become a part of it, with only my head and hands to show that I am one

of those to-be-pitied human beings, called a woman.

I ask you truly, which can take the more comfort, a vigorous, healthy shrub or a dissatisfied, nervous woman? Which is the more to be envied, a great hardy tree, so strong and reposeful, so given to longevity, or a restless, short lived man? We think we have far the best of it in this curious little world; but I doubt, if a tree could talk, it would declare itself willing to accept our burdens, our self-imposed sufferings, our brief lives, even for the glory of being called a man.

The Meadow Larks admired my goods with little cheerful twitters of satisfaction; but they looked a trifle queer when I brought out my big purchase from the spare-room closet.



“There,” I said, setting it before them, “is a fine lay figure. It represents ‘*me*.’ It won’t faint away while you are fitting it, it is easily pleased, and does not send back work.”

“What!” cried the elder Meadow Lark, “do you intend us to fit that creature?”

“That creature represents *me*, if you please. It has exactly my bust measure, length of arms, and size of waist. What more can you want? Of course I expect you to fit it; and kindly make the green gown first, for I bought that to suit myself. After I am pleased, I always feel like pleasing others. Good-morning.”

I ran down into the garden and hid, so the Meadow Larks should not find me.

I always notice when I set out to hide I am generally found. This morning I hid behind the ice-house, on a little seat amid a tangle of morning-glories. I had some literature with me which I prefer to Shakespeare. It consisted of a pile of floral catalogues, and a magazine entitled, *How to Grow Flowers*.

I was just going to have the best time, when Rhoda found me.

Poor Rhoda, she really looked excited, and her turban was all awry. "Oh, missus," said she, "de stage-coach has done fotched a lot o' visitors."

"How many?" I asked.

"I'se counted five."

Five visitors! and I so pleasantly

engaged! "How do they look, Rhoda?" I inquired.

"Wall, honey, sum is young an' sum is old."

"I'm afraid," I said solemnly, "they are my relatives."

"'Deed, no, missus, dey's jes' folks frum de big hotel. I'se seen 'em afore. Dem ain't no relatives."

"Wherever can I hide, Rhoda?" I pleaded.

"I don' know, honey" — and all of Rhoda's ivories showed — "but Pat he clean out de cistern yes'day; dar ain't no water in it, an' he lef' de ladder down dar."

"The very place, Rhoda! Peep out and see if the coast is clear."

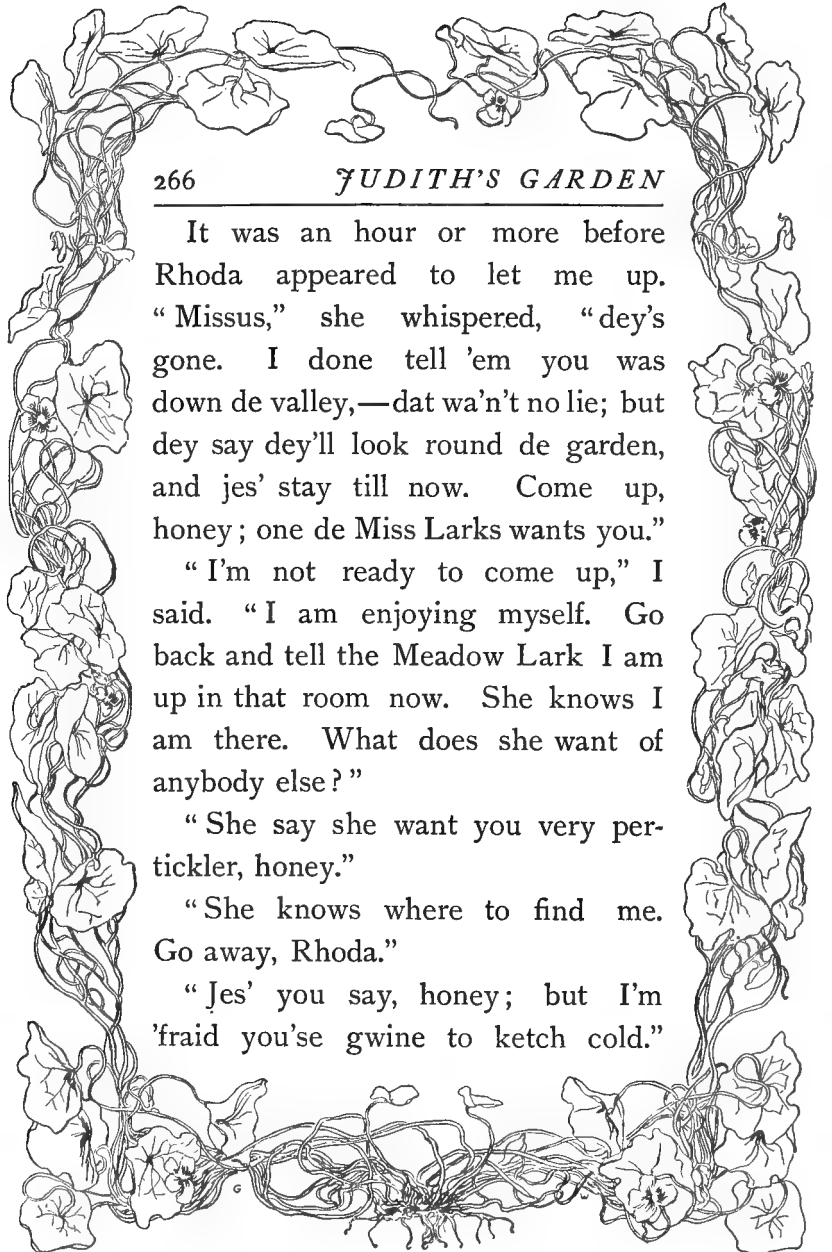
"Dar ain't a soul in sight, honey." I scrambled up my literature and

made for the back garden. Rhoda held the ladder, and I went down into a cool subterranean depth, taking with me the magazine, *How to Grow Flowers*.

"Just leave a little crack for light, Rhoda," I whispered, as she replaced the cover. "Now go in and tell those visitors I've gone down—oh, anywhere."

A ladder is not the most uncomfortable seat in the world, nor a cistern, minus water, the most undesirable place in the world upon a hot day. A cool greenish light pervaded my retreat, and not a fly descended to torment me. I so enjoyed myself that I was ready to exclaim like Horace Greeley when in prison:—

"Thank God! here is a little time to myself."



It was an hour or more before Rhoda appeared to let me up. "Missus," she whispered, "dey's gone. I done tell 'em you was down de valley,—dat wa'n't no lie; but dey say dey'll look round de garden, and jes' stay till now. Come up, honey; one de Miss Larks wants you."

"I'm not ready to come up," I said. "I am enjoying myself. Go back and tell the Meadow Lark I am up in that room now. She knows I am there. What does she want of anybody else?"

"She say she want you very per-tickler, honey."

"She knows where to find me. Go away, Rhoda."

"Jes' you say, honey; but I'm 'fraid you'se gwine to ketch cold."

"Catch cold on such a day! Don't be foolish."

She went away, and I spent another short delightful hour reading, when suddenly the cover was jerked off the cistern. I heard a peculiar noise, and before I could expostulate, down upon me came a perfect deluge of cold water.

"For God! what you'se doin'?" I heard Rhoda cry.

"Begorra, I'm rinsing out the cistern," said Pat.

But Rhoda was before him frantically pushing him back. She knelt by the opening, and called, "Honey, honey, is you kilt?"

"No, Rhoda," I replied, as I climbed up the ladder, a dripping but justly punished Undine.

I
SOLVE XVIII
A PROBLEM



W *HAT* is more pleasing to the eye, when riding through the country on a hot day, than to come across a patch of cool green cabbages splattering a hillside? or long rows of tender green celery tops, peering up from the muck of a fertile valley? These growing vegetables have a beauty of their own, almost equal to a floral display. There is nothing much more interesting than to watch one's

own potatoes grow; and if I could not have a flower garden, I should certainly have a kitchen garden.

The present of a green succulent vegetable is not to be despised; for it (the vegetable) serves two purposes,—that of being admired and afterward eaten. Pat and I esteemed his fine cabbage a very presentable gift to the Browns' Belinda.

She was not ungrateful, for she accepted the cabbage in the spirit it was given; but she was obdurate when a polite suggestion was made to her that the hens move out of the greenhouse.

"God a mercy!" said she, in a loud strident whisper, "there's no meat to be got. What should we do without the hens? Vilets—go way! They

blows when they pleases; but the hens have got to lay."

That there was a great deal of sense in her remarks I was obliged to admit, when I reflected what could happen to violets. They could be taken with the red spider or the blight; they could freeze; and lastly, they could refuse to bloom. To be sure, hens could get the pip; but judging from Tom Norton's rooster, they were built on a scheme calculated to endure; for that hardy, pestiferous creature was as healthy as an Indian. Then, why not hens?

It was clear to me, if Belinda could be won over and the hens become homeless, a great responsibility would rest upon my shoulders. In such a case I might even be the means of

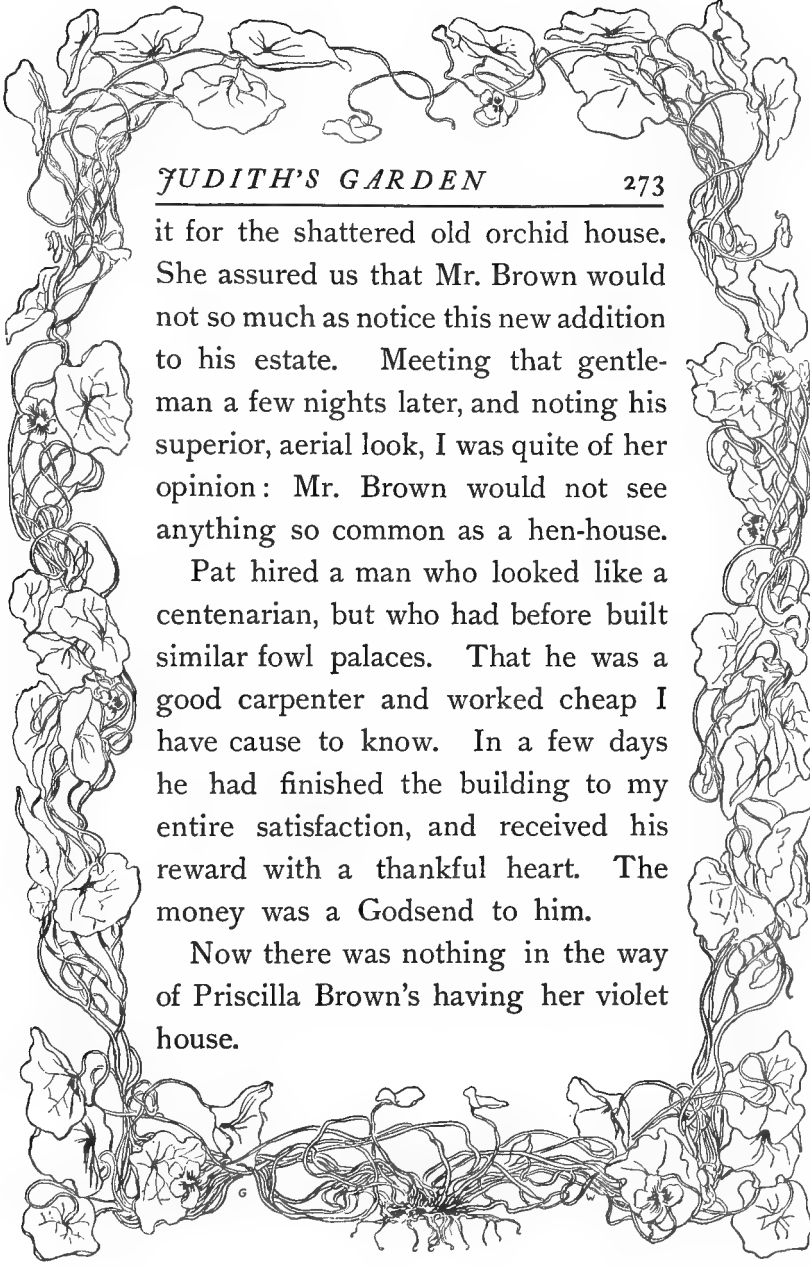
starving the Browns. The very thought gave me an attack of cold shivers. What could I do — give up my plan? No, that would be impossible. Plans are plans, and this was one of my pet ones. I sat in the garden a whole hour before I reached the bright and wonderful decision that Belinda must have a hen-house built for her.

How much would a hen-house cost? I calculated thirty dollars, at least. Oh, well, I could take my month's allowance; but then, I had planned to spend the most of that for Madonna lilies. In fancy I had seen a hedge of these lilies growing on this earth right at the end of my garden. Could I give up the bulbs and build a hen-house? It seemed a frightful sacrifice, but at last I rose

above it. I determined to build the hen-house with this month's allowance, then take next month's allowance and buy the lilies. I really should be nothing out after all.

It always pleases me to make a sacrifice, that is, when it costs me little. It gives me the virtuous feeling that, somehow, I am a trifle set apart from the rest of the human race — a superior being. I remember feeling thus when I gave away my blue henrietta cloth. I detested the gown; it did not fit me and I seldom wore it; so I sacrificed it, and the pleasant sensation I had for days afterward decided me not to regret it.

When Belinda found that she could have a nice, snug hen-house free of cost, she was quite willing to exchange



it for the shattered old orchid house. She assured us that Mr. Brown would not so much as notice this new addition to his estate. Meeting that gentleman a few nights later, and noting his superior, aerial look, I was quite of her opinion: Mr. Brown would not see anything so common as a hen-house.

Pat hired a man who looked like a centenarian, but who had before built similar fowl palaces. That he was a good carpenter and worked cheap I have cause to know. In a few days he had finished the building to my entire satisfaction, and received his reward with a thankful heart. The money was a Godsend to him.

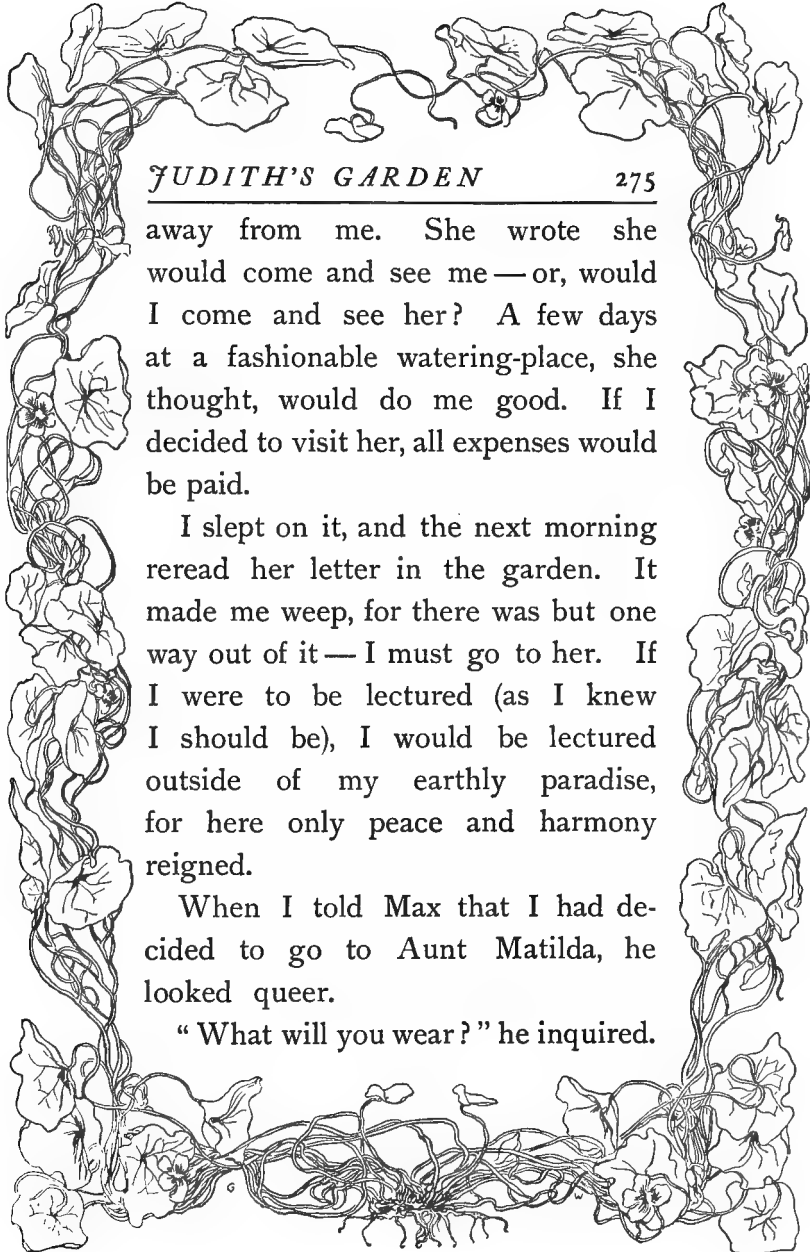
Now there was nothing in the way of Priscilla Brown's having her violet house.

*I PAY
A VISIT
TO MY AUNT*

XIX



I HAVE been away. You will wonder that I could leave my garden in this interesting of all months — August, the very carnival of flower time. But I had to go. Aunt Matilda wrote she was coming to visit me, and I keenly realised what that meant. To be sure, she would stop but a few days on her way to a fashionable watering-place; but those few days! I love my aunt dearly, but I love her best



away from me. She wrote she would come and see me — or, would I come and see her? A few days at a fashionable watering-place, she thought, would do me good. If I decided to visit her, all expenses would be paid.

I slept on it, and the next morning reread her letter in the garden. It made me weep, for there was but one way out of it — I must go to her. If I were to be lectured (as I knew I should be), I would be lectured outside of my earthly paradise, for here only peace and harmony reigned.

When I told Max that I had decided to go to Aunt Matilda, he looked queer.

“What will you wear?” he inquired.

"Haven't I three new gowns?" I cried indignantly.

"Do they fit you?" he asked.

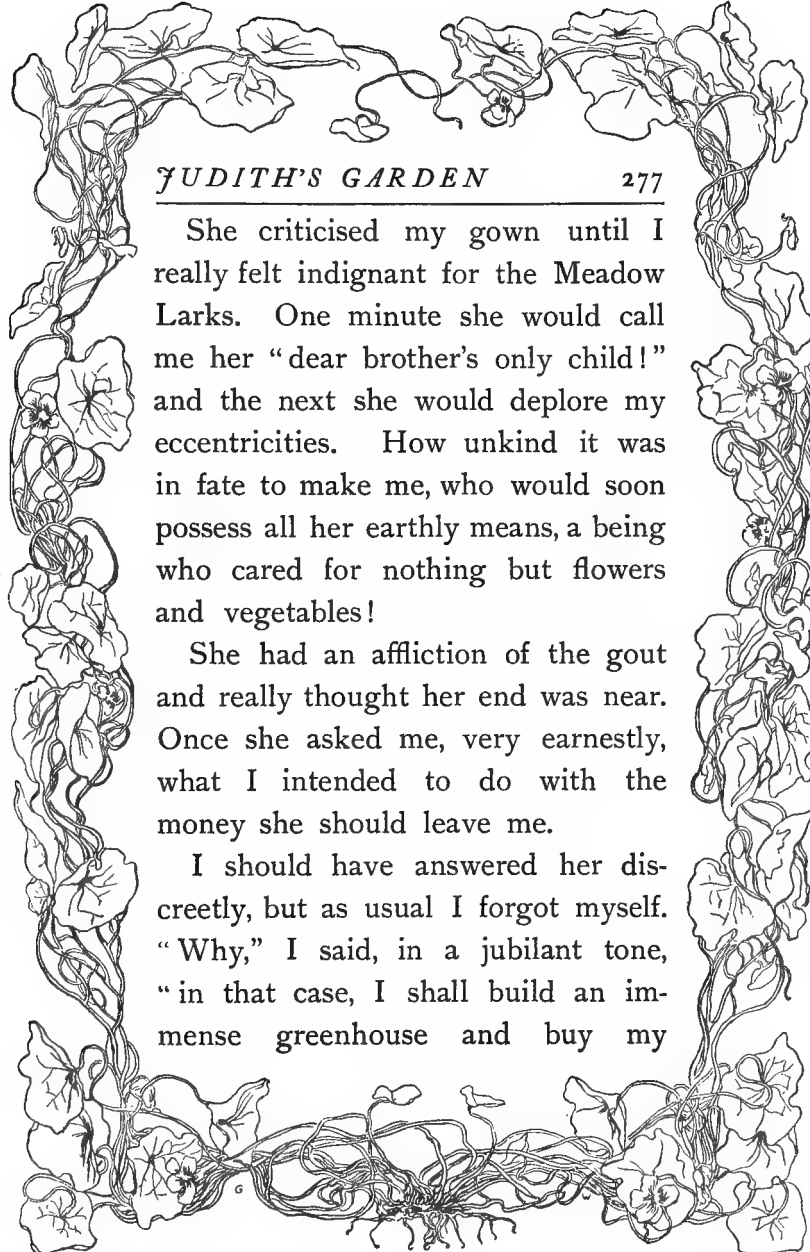
"Of course they do. Did I not pay a good round sum for a lay figure to represent me? I am sure those Meadow Larks had every opportunity to fit me. They could work for hours on that figure, while I should have fidgeted in ten minutes."

"Have you a bonnet?"

I looked a little blank, remembering the fate of my bonnet. "Oh, I can wear my sailor hat," I said. "I've heard, at fashionable watering-places, bonnets are quite out of style."

So I went. I hope I shall never go again.

The first day I was there Aunt Matilda spent in lecturing me.



She criticised my gown until I really felt indignant for the Meadow Larks. One minute she would call me her "dear brother's only child!" and the next she would deplore my eccentricities. How unkind it was in fate to make me, who would soon possess all her earthly means, a being who cared for nothing but flowers and vegetables!

She had an affliction of the gout and really thought her end was near. Once she asked me, very earnestly, what I intended to do with the money she should leave me.

I should have answered her discreetly, but as usual I forgot myself. "Why," I said, in a jubilant tone, "in that case, I shall build an immense greenhouse and buy my

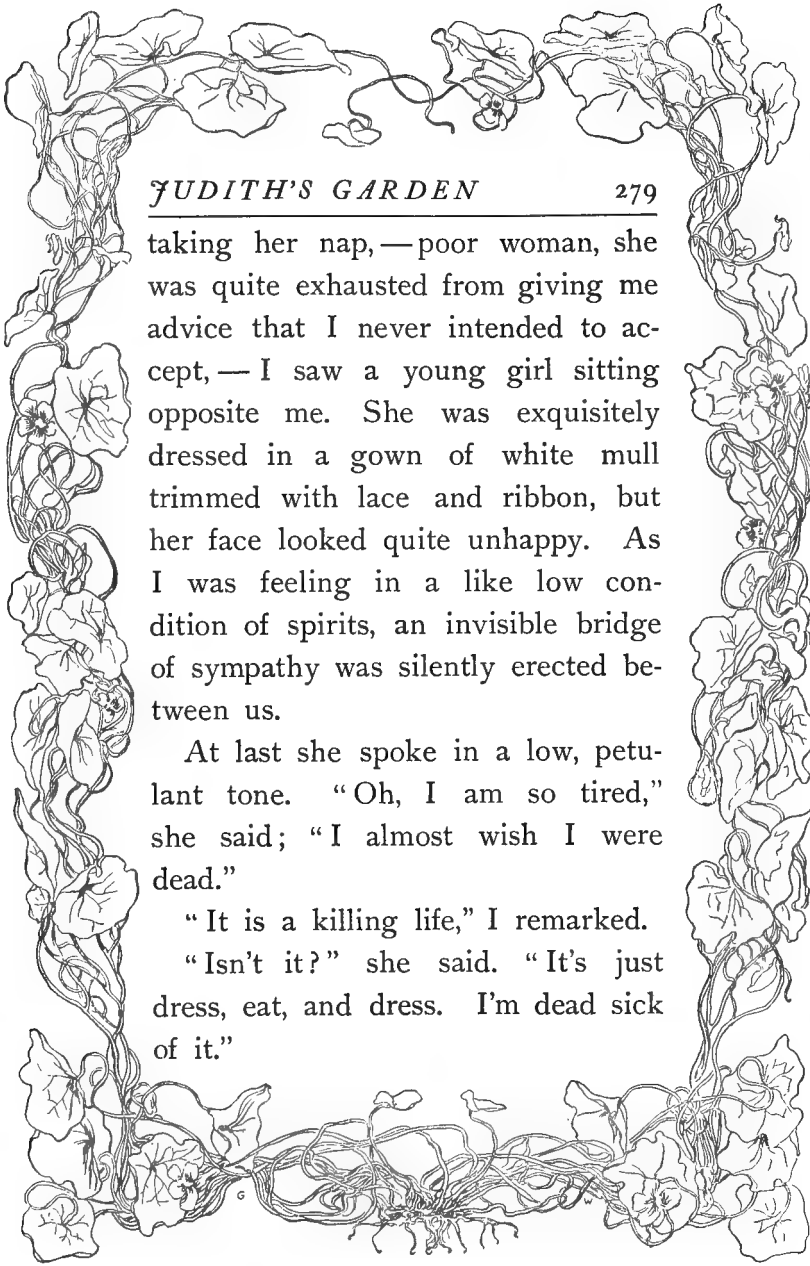
bulbs by the bushel. I will have such a garden — ah!"

I caught myself; for Aunt Matilda was in tears.

Those tiresome chattering women that I met at the great hotel! They were all rich, and had maids to pick up their thimbles or to thread their needles. They did lace work and exchanged gossip, while I sat there in my green gown like a transplanted, homesick shrub.

The only thing that soothed me was to wonder what Pat was doing. Was he chasing the aster bugs with intent to kill, or was he weeding the stock? I wondered if the dahlia hedge had bloomed, and if the cosmos had come out.

One day, while Aunt Matilda was



taking her nap,—poor woman, she was quite exhausted from giving me advice that I never intended to accept,—I saw a young girl sitting opposite me. She was exquisitely dressed in a gown of white mull trimmed with lace and ribbon, but her face looked quite unhappy. As I was feeling in a like low condition of spirits, an invisible bridge of sympathy was silently erected between us.

At last she spoke in a low, petulant tone. "Oh, I am so tired," she said; "I almost wish I were dead."

"It is a killing life," I remarked.

"Isn't it?" she said. "It's just dress, eat, and dress. I'm dead sick of it."

"Why don't you get a garden?" I inquired.

"A garden?" she looked surprised.

"Did you ever dig or plant in one?"

She appeared a trifle disgusted. "No, I never did; did you?"

"Yes, indeed," I answered blithely; "and it's the only life worth living. I just adore it." I had been so held down that I suppose I was like bottled champagne when the cork is removed — I bubbled over. For one good hour I entertained that girl with a full description of my garden and the little grove back of it. I told her of the lake, of the early dawns on that lovely water, the gorgeous sunsets, and the singing birds that haunted it. When I was through

and my face felt like a piece of scarlet flannel, I beheld, instead of one girl, a whole row of women, with lace work idle and suspended needles, taking in this apostrophe to nature.

I felt so ashamed of myself, so afraid of what Aunt Matilda would say when she heard of it (as I knew she surely would), that I slipped away at once and hid in my room the rest of the afternoon.

That night, as I was dressing for dinner, — in another effort of the Meadow Larks, not so great a success as the green gown, — there came a knock at my door. I opened it, and a servant handed in a note.

It was from one of the leaders of society, politely asking me if I would

not repeat my lecture of the afternoon in the parlour that evening.

In less than five minutes I was arrayed in my night-gown and in bed, with a towel pinned tightly about my head. Aunt Matilda came in a little later and found me dreadfully ill (?). She ordered tea and toast for me when I could just as well have eaten a hearty dinner. In fact, I told her this sort of attack always made me strangely hungry; but she thought it would not be wise for me to eat much, so I simply starved, and trembled at my narrow escape.

Next morning I rose early, long before a fashionable woman had stirred, and hastened to the telegraph office.

There I wrote a message to Max:

"You have just got to fall ill and telegraph me to come home. If I stay another day, I shall die." The agent pointed out where I might condense it; but I told him I wished it emphatic, and cheerfully paid the extra charge.

Then I hurried back to the hotel, went to bed, and felt quite unable to rise for breakfast.

About noon I received the answer to my message. It read:—

"I am indisposed. Hasten home. Max."

I showed it to Aunt Matilda.

"You are not well enough to travel, dear child," she said.

"Oh, I must, I must," I cried. "When Max is ill, who shall keep me from his bedside?"

When I was once aboard the train, and the engine had snorted a last farewell to that fashionable watering-place, I began to feel as chipper as a hardy brown thrush. I took out the sizable lunch Aunt Matilda thoughtfully had packed for me, and ate every crumb of it. Then I hoisted the car window, and at every mile-post we passed, I breathed a prayer of thankfulness for my lucky escape.

When I told Max that I had been taken for a female lecturer, he laughed till I was afraid of asphyxia. It all seemed a huge joke to him.

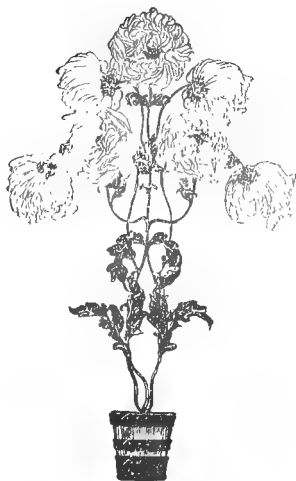
At twelve o'clock that night I felt the bed shake; it was Max, laughing.

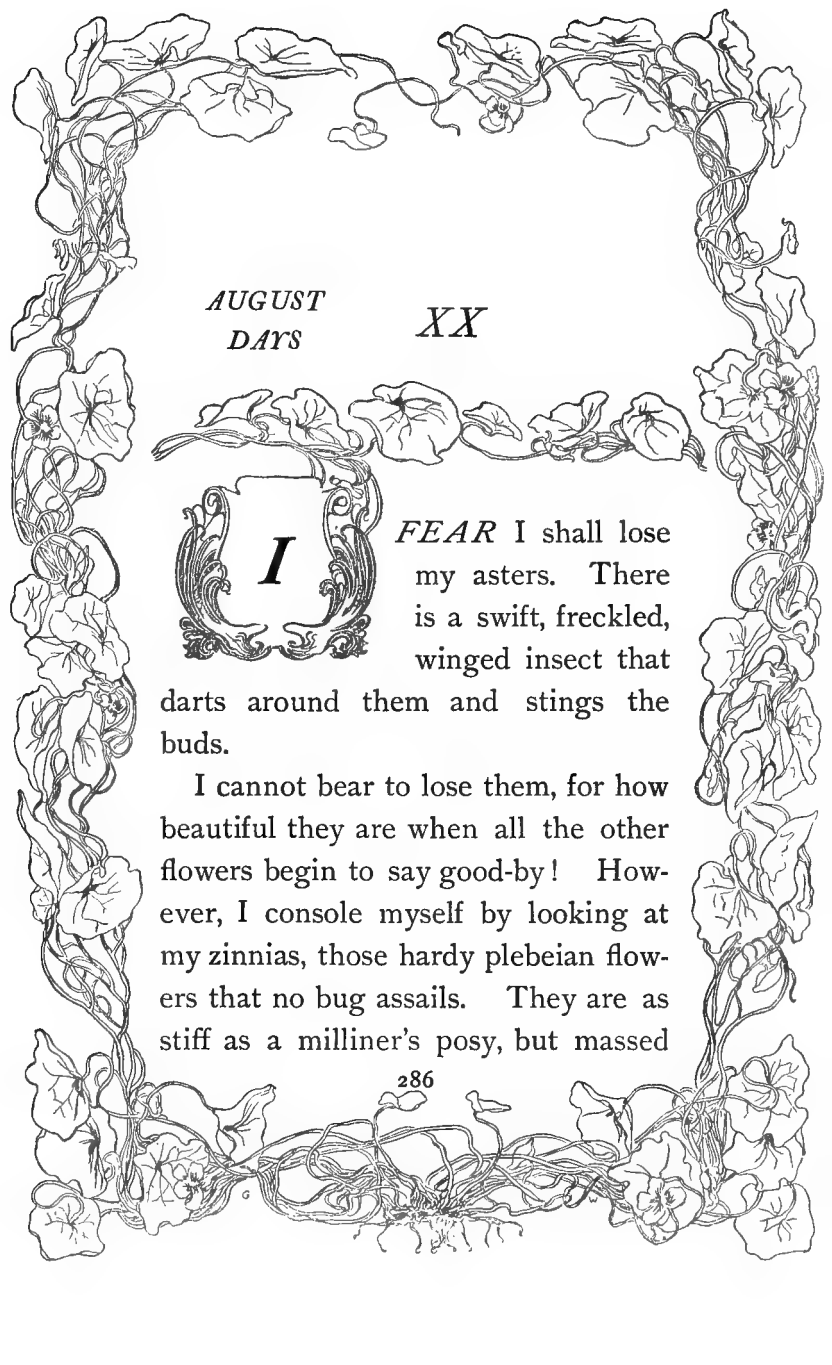
"What now?" I asked in an

injured tone; I just hate to be awakened.

"Oh, nothing; only I happened to think of you as a female lecturer."

How more than exasperating a man can be!





AUGUST
DAYS

XX



I

FEAR I shall lose
my asters. There
is a swift, freckled,
winged insect that
darts around them and stings the
buds.

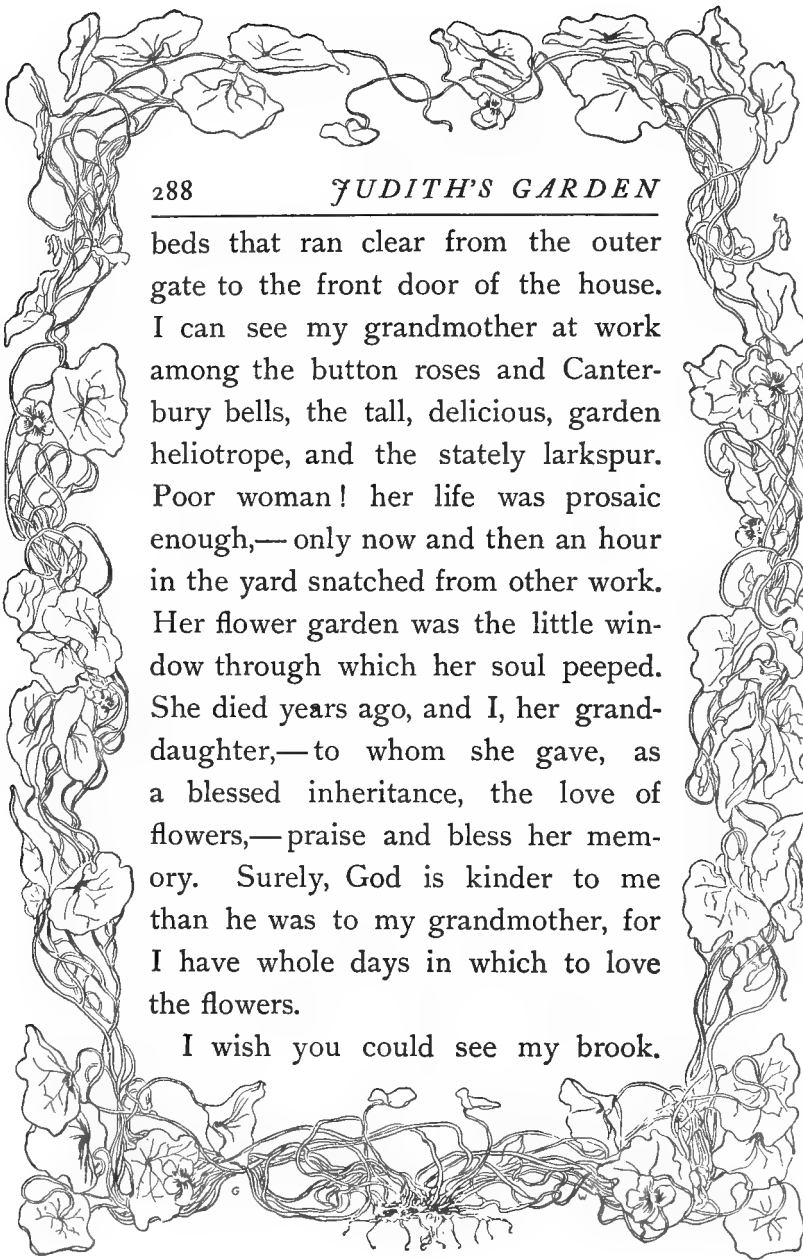
I cannot bear to lose them, for how
beautiful they are when all the other
flowers begin to say good-by! How-
ever, I console myself by looking at
my zinnias, those hardy plebeian flow-
ers that no bug assails. They are as
stiff as a milliner's posy, but massed

together, from a rosy cream to a deep red, from pale yellow to a saffron pink, they make a brilliant patch of colour that delights my eye. I like these bold touches given us by a dying summer.

Through the green trees I can see my bed of marigolds, a golden orange flaming in the chastened sunlight. What a lovely, charming world this is! provided, one loves nature and has a garden.

These still August days I delight to row on the lake. In the serene afternoon I sit in my boat and dream, not dreams of conquest, or lover's dreams, but just dreams of sprouting bulbs and beds of gorgeous flowers.

Often I think of my grandmother's garden. Of the stiff, box-bordered



beds that ran clear from the outer gate to the front door of the house. I can see my grandmother at work among the button roses and Canterbury bells, the tall, delicious, garden heliotrope, and the stately larkspur. Poor woman! her life was prosaic enough,—only now and then an hour in the yard snatched from other work. Her flower garden was the little window through which her soul peeped. She died years ago, and I, her granddaughter,—to whom she gave, as a blessed inheritance, the love of flowers,—praise and bless her memory. Surely, God is kinder to me than he was to my grandmother, for I have whole days in which to love the flowers.

I wish you could see my brook.

Along its banks a little plant is blossoming called the jewel-weed, looking like dainty little yellow orchids hanging from fragile, light green stems; and where the blue flag begins, there is a great clump of gorgeous Joe-Pye weed, its crimson flowers flaunting against the dark green reeds.

I have been thinking about the fashionable women I met when visiting Aunt Matilda. No doubt they suppose themselves happy, but I know they cannot feel true happiness until they have dug up a flower bed, planted something in it, and watched that something grow; until they have learned to love the birds, the fields, and the blue sky.

Speaking of the sky, is it not more

than beautiful in August? I truly believe that watching it every day in the open air would eventually cure rheumatism, gout, or consumption. Anyway, nature is our greatest panacea for the ills of life.

Can it be possible that soon all this lovely summer will have fled? If I had my way, I should follow up summer. As soon as I had heard of a pleasant place where everything was green, I would go there and stay until I heard of a pleasanter one; then, move to that. My life would be a regular holiday, and I should not need the thought of heaven to comfort me.

Pat has at last succeeded in mending the old orchid house. Belinda has helped him by the light of a

lantern after the two Browns were snug in bed.

To-morrow night he is going to plant the violets — they have come at last. The earth is on the spot, and he has only to fill the long benches and place each plant snugly in its black bed. Oh, how I do hope they will grow! The old heater was uninjured, so they can be kept warm but not too cosey, for violets love fresh air and little heat.

When I offered to pay Pat for his extra labour, he said,—the dear old fellow,—“Not a cint, missus. Shure, 'twor only a pashtime.”

Pat seems to think I was very self-sacrificing in building the hen-house and buying the violets. I suppose he believes I went without

something to do all this. It makes me smile to think of it; for, as you well know, I took my next month's allowance and bought the lily bulbs I so wanted. What then did I sacrifice?

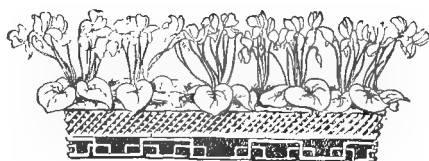
Rhoda is preserving peaches to-day, and making blackberry jam. The whole house is fragrant. I offered to help her.

"Go 'way, honey," she said. "Yo' don' know nothin' 'bout sich things. You'se ain't no mo' 'sponsible dan dat dar yeller sunflower hangin' by de fence."

"You're a naughty old black mammy," I replied, "and I don't want to help you; but, say, Rhoda, when the preserves are done just let me taste them?"

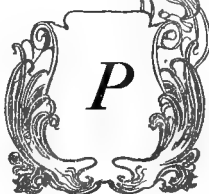
"I don' ever forgit my honey," said Rhoda.

I knew she would not. An hour later she came down the garden walk, bearing, on a dainty plate, a luscious blackberry tart and a dish of peach preserves. I ate them, sitting on the bench by the marigold bed, so that I might enjoy two things at the same time.



*A
WILLING
MESSENGER*

XXI



RISCILLA
BROWN has seen
her violet house,
and read the card
tacked upon the door, "Fitted up by
a friend."

She came over to-day, her cheeks
red and her eyes glowing, to tell me
all about it.

"I suppose," she said innocently,
"it was Belinda. She sold eggs and
bought the violets. Our hens have
laid well this summer. Father talks

of increasing the brood, as he will need more money for his inventions. Oh, I wish you would come over and see the violet house."

"I will this afternoon," I said, and I went, but not alone; for, wonderful to relate, the stage-coach brought me a visitor — my husband's college friend, Mr. Donald Warren.

He was the same charming, plant-loving, young man.

As I rowed him across the lake, air castles floated all about me. I could scarcely get down to earth in order to answer his questions concerning the garden, so absorbed was I.

When we arrived at the Brown domain, there was Priscilla to meet us.

If I could describe her to you —

well, you would fall in love with her yourself. She was dressed in a rose-pink mull—a little too short and scant of skirt, but very, very becoming. Around her slender waist was clasped a girdle of antique silver, representing the heads of the gods and goddesses, and over a faultless neck was thrown a scarf of silvery gauze which but half concealed the marble whiteness of her skin. Her hat was a curious drooping affair trimmed with pale roses and quantities of lace,—old-fashioned, but so quaint and beautiful! In fact, Priscilla Brown looked exactly like an exquisite old-time picture of rare value. The moment Donald Warren looked at her, I counted his heart well lost.

We stayed for an hour in the violet



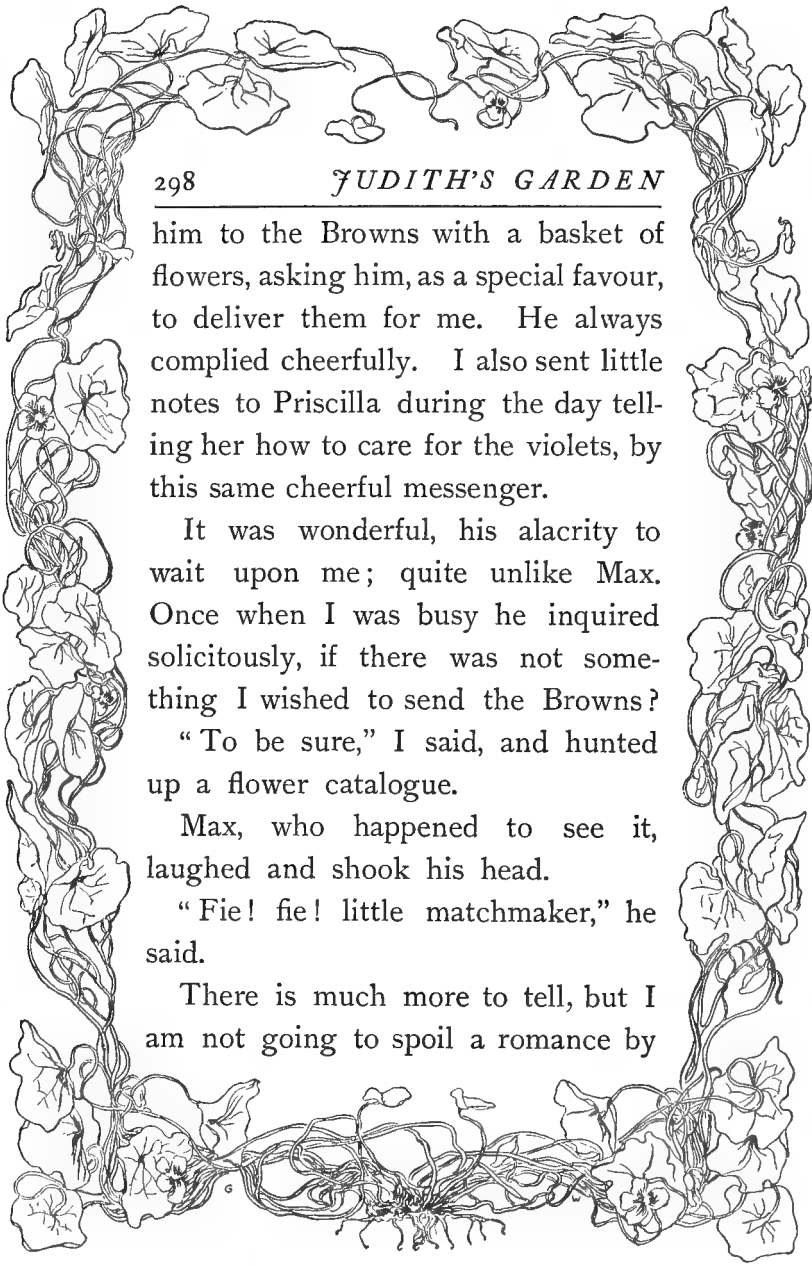
*"THE MOMENT DONALD WARRELY LOOKED AT
HER HE COUNTED HIS HEART WELL LOST"*

house, and I read to them, out of a little book, just how to raise violets. I felt, instinctively, that I was about as tiresome as a tract woman, and I knew from the inattention that Priscilla bestowed upon me, those violets were doomed.

So it proved; in spite of poor old Belinda sitting up nights to keep the fire, they dwindled; got the red spider and yellow leaves; and out of the whole crop Priscilla Brown only picked ten violets that winter.

Did I regret the venture? No, I gloried in it; for was it not the stepping stone to a most delightful romance—the sequel to my joyful summer?

Mr. Donald Warren lingered with us a week. Every morning I sent



him to the Browns with a basket of flowers, asking him, as a special favour, to deliver them for me. He always complied cheerfully. I also sent little notes to Priscilla during the day telling her how to care for the violets, by this same cheerful messenger.

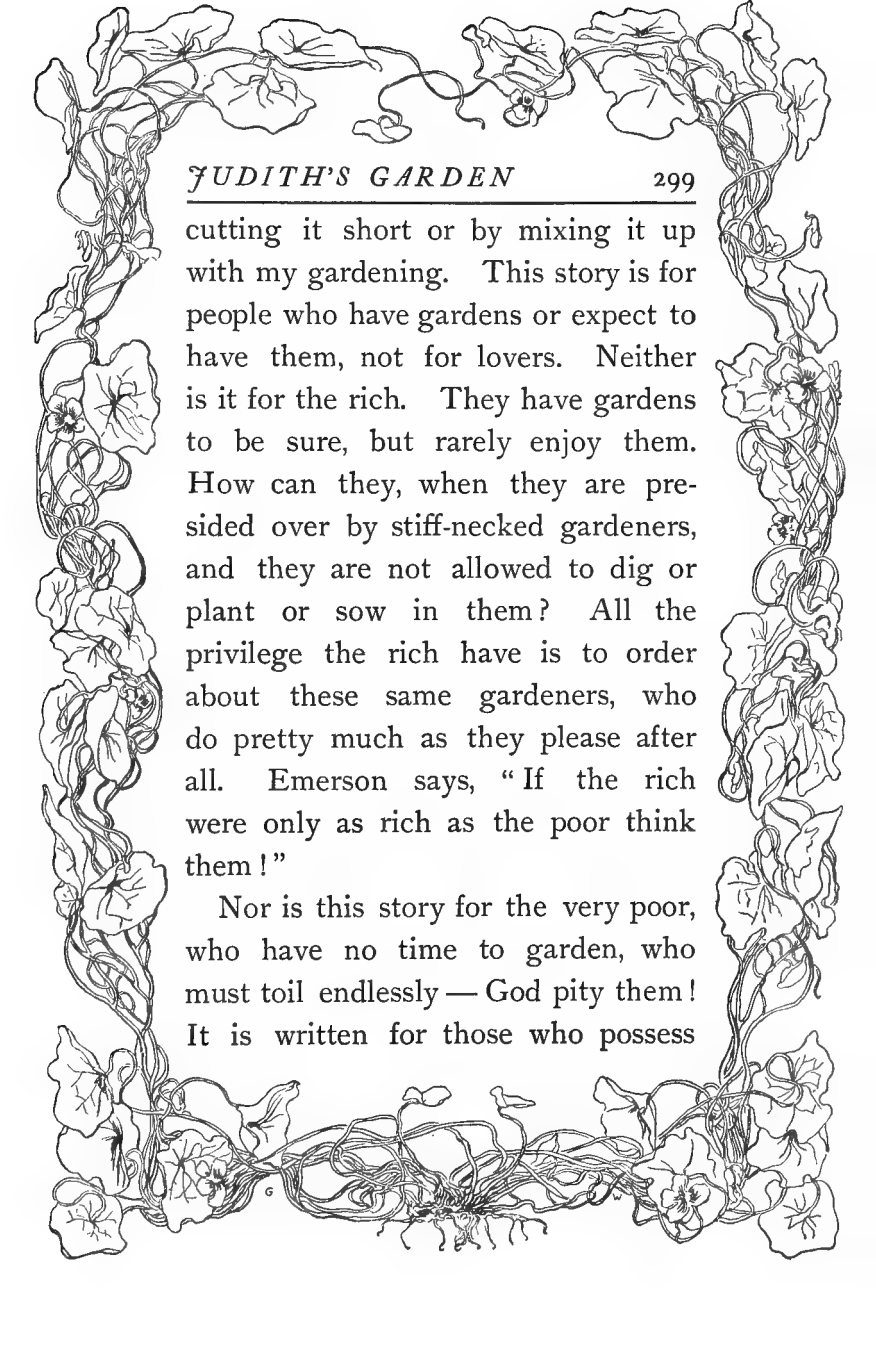
It was wonderful, his alacrity to wait upon me; quite unlike Max. Once when I was busy he inquired solicitously, if there was not something I wished to send the Browns?

"To be sure," I said, and hunted up a flower catalogue.

Max, who happened to see it, laughed and shook his head.

"Fie! fie! little matchmaker," he said.

There is much more to tell, but I am not going to spoil a romance by



cutting it short or by mixing it up with my gardening. This story is for people who have gardens or expect to have them, not for lovers. Neither is it for the rich. They have gardens to be sure, but rarely enjoy them. How can they, when they are presided over by stiff-necked gardeners, and they are not allowed to dig or plant or sow in them? All the privilege the rich have is to order about these same gardeners, who do pretty much as they please after all. Emerson says, "If the rich were only as rich as the poor think them!"

Nor is this story for the very poor, who have no time to garden, who must toil endlessly — God pity them! It is written for those who possess

blessed mediocrity. Such can dig when they like, pot plants, and enjoy themselves. They are the least observed class in the world, therefore the most fortunate.



MY
GREENHOUSE *XXII*



HERE are some things that pay, not always in the results we aim at, but often in unheard-of, astonishing ways. The building of a practical hen-house, the stocking of a violet house, seemed to lead up to the art of horticulture; instead, they led up to something very different but none the less delightful.

It is a great satisfaction to me to feel that I planned the match.

I believe if I could not go to the country but once a year, I should go in September or early October. Then the fields are full of bluebirds, lingering before their winter exodus. Then come those peaceful, gorgeous days when the earth seems like a fairy bubble, reflecting a thousand tints too lovely to be lost.

There is another world mirrored in the lake, so perfect that one almost doubts its unreality.

My gladioluses are one blaze of glory. There is such satisfaction in a gladiolus bulb; it only wants a little room in a darkened chamber of the earth, to think awhile; then it sends forth long reedlike leaves, and by and by a whole procession of flowers clamber up a sturdy stem

and burst into brilliant colours. I have such lovely shades, — from white, flecked with pink, to pale yellow; from scarlet to the deepest crimson. They look as cheerful as the poppy bed in July.

I only sleep indoors now. These days are too precious to lose. I want every minute of them out in the sunshine and glad fresh air. I realise that winter will soon be here, when all the green things I love will be fast asleep, and I shall be transplanted back in town. How I hate the thought! If it were not for my duty to Max, I should remain here all winter, and make smudges on the frosty window panes just to watch my garden beneath its mantle of snow.

I have the Madonna lilies and a hundred tulip bulbs. All day Pat and I have been planting them. The lilies we massed in clumps, and the tulips we set in rows in a long narrow bed.

When Max expostulated with me for spending all my allowance for bulbs, he said: —

"This is not your place. Next year Tom Norton may want his garden back again."

"That is true," I replied cheerfully, "but I am like my grandfather. Whenever he planted a tree, he said, 'I may not live to enjoy its shade, but there are others who will.' I presume Mr. Norton will not object to a fine tulip bed, and who ever despised Madonna lilies?"

"Oh, little wife, little wife!" groaned Max.

Supposing I never came back here, I have so enjoyed buying and planting these bulbs that I cannot have lost. To me it is just as sensible to spend one's money for things one really enjoys, as to buy with it bonnets and furbelows.

Pat came over this morning with a stout-looking root in his hand. He planted it very carefully in a conspicuous spot on the lawn.

"There, be jabbers," he cried, stamping the earth about it, "is a sizable red piny. 'Twor sadly naded in this garden. 'Tis the only flower me ould woman loikes."

I laughed, for I seemed to see, next summer, its blowzy silken leaves

opening into hardy red blooms,—a good, steadfast, plebeian flower, and as wholesome looking as a cabbage.

I have been consulting with Pat, and we have planned to tie up all the roses in straw, to strew the lily-of-the-valley beds, and to cover the tulips. The hyacinth bulbs, on the south side of the house, will be boarded over,—everything shipshape for winter.

In a few days we move back to town. Last night came a hard frost, and now the garden looks a wreck of blighted hopes. In these high altitudes the frosts come early and the winters are long.

Pat went through the garden this morning looking mournfully at the blackened beds. It is all over, my joyful summer.

I tried hard to keep the tears back when I looked out of my bedroom window. Max noticed me, and sought to comfort me.

"You must drive into town with me, dear," he said. "I have something to show you."

That something was a small greenhouse built out from the rear of our dining room. It was fitted with a steam coil and the benches were filled with dirt. "All ready for another garden," Max said.

Dear Max! I know he is a most unusual husband; for what other man would have thought of pleasing his wife this way? Now, I shall not have a dreary winter, given over to society, but a continuation of summer on a smaller scale. I need not step

out of my own house to find this summer; it is only two steps from my dining room.

I was so delighted with the greenhouse that I forgot to grieve when we finally left for town. To be sure, it wrenched my heart to part with Pat, and that poor old man even shed tears. He promised faithfully to serve me another summer, and I feel very sure that something will happen, — Mr. Norton will remain in Europe, or else he will take a dislike to country life, and I shall have my own again. Nature has so few real lovers that she is not going to disappoint me.

I bade Priscilla Brown good-by and advised her to tend well her violets. "Mr. Warren will visit us

again in the spring," I remarked casually, "shortly after our return to the country. He seems infatuated with this vicinity."

Then I bade good-by to my earthly paradise. "I go to prepare another," I said.

For the next few weeks my time was all taken up buying plants and bulbs for my greenhouse. I visited the florists, and their kindness and attention I shall never forget. They really seemed fond of me, and never tired of telling or advising me what plants to buy. The result was, I drew on my allowance for three months ahead. My new winter sacque I put into daffodils, Easter lilies, and hyacinths. As I intended to buy a good one, I had quite a

little show for the money. My winter bonnet I put into crocuses and primroses; my cloth gown into vines and miscellaneous plants; then I looked at my charitable fund. The longer I looked at it, the more I was tempted; and I am ashamed to confess, that in the end I took the money that should have gone to foreign missions and bought with it a few extra dozens of daffodils. You see I got to thinking how crimped and yellow they would look—all in bloom in the sunlight. But, let it be said to my everlasting credit, I marked every pot in which I planted those daffodils, with a large F. and M. So, when I have had the delight of coddling them into bloom, they shall all be carried to sick and sor-

rowful souls who need a flower to cheer them.

I have not done right, I know, to put my whole wardrobe into the greenhouse; but who does do right in this wicked world?

My latest purchase is a bird in a gilded cage, to sing for me among my flowers. I advertised for a singer, and a freckled-faced, snub-nosed child brought me one. He is a beautiful orange-coloured bird.

"Its name is Nancy," said the small girl, "but she's a he. We thought she was a she, until Nancy began to sing; then mother knew she was a he. We didn't change the name, because Nancy answers to it."

I took in this curious anomaly of

genders; and a better, more cheerful singer I have never known. Nancy is so tame now, that I sometimes leave the cage door open and allow him to flit joyfully among the flowers.

When Max comes home at night he finds me in the greenhouse. I can only quote Scripture:—

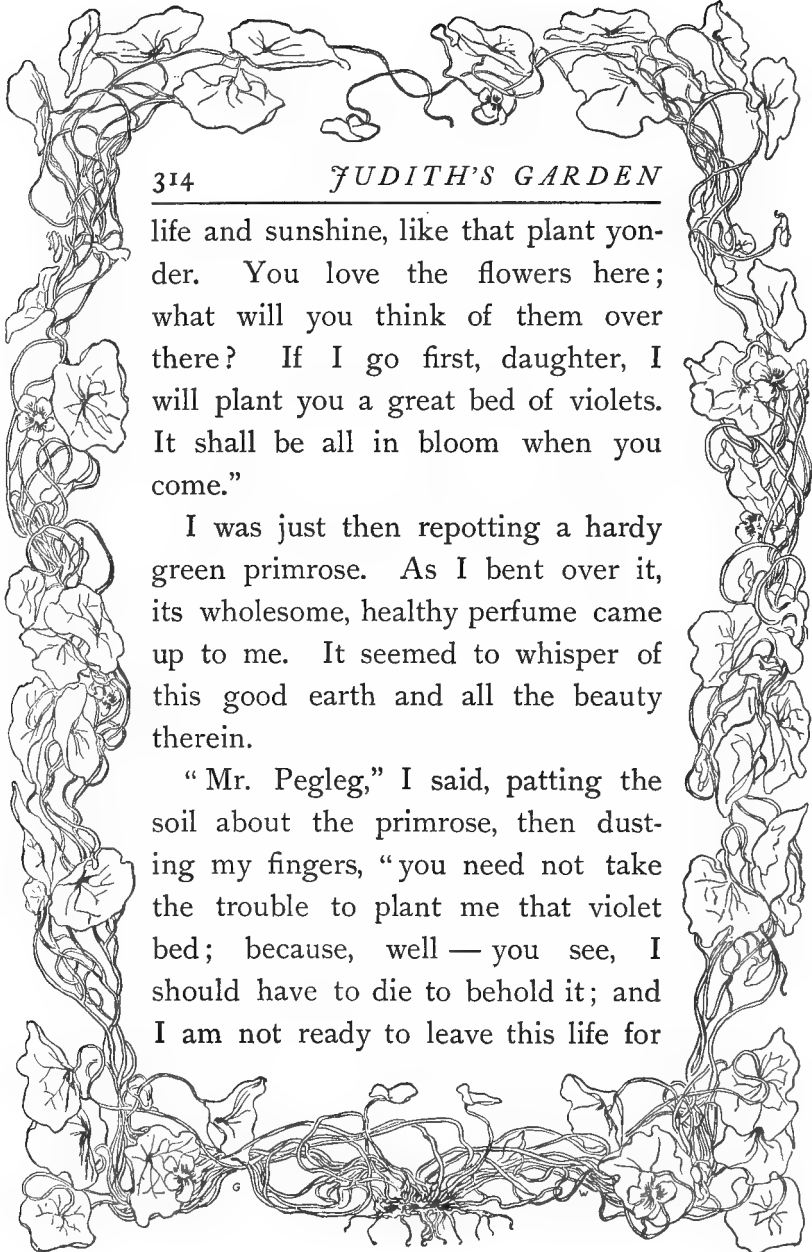
“Where the treasure is, there is the heart.” Sometimes I am kneeling before a pile of good dirt, potting plants; sometimes I am snipping off dead leaves; sometimes I am just lingering round to watch my green babies grow. Max is getting a little interested himself; for only yesterday he asked me the name of a plant.

I have a still more interested visitor to my greenhouse,—an old, old man. His name is Mr. Pegleg; and,

would you believe it? Fate, not unkind enough in the choice of a name, has robbed him of a leg. He wears a wooden stump; and really it goes against me to call him Mr. Pegleg; but what can I do, when that is his name?

Max has no cause to be jealous of Mr. Pegleg's attention to me, for he is eighty at the least. I presume he will die soon, and I hope when my time comes I may be as resigned as he appears to be. Seated in a comfortable chair among the flowers, watching me work, he often airs his views upon immortality.

"There is no death," said he yesterday, his serene old face lighting up, "it is only transition; just a little pushing upward, my dear, into more



life and sunshine, like that plant yonder. You love the flowers here; what will you think of them over there? If I go first, daughter, I will plant you a great bed of violets. It shall be all in bloom when you come."

I was just then repotting a hardy green primrose. As I bent over it, its wholesome, healthy perfume came up to me. It seemed to whisper of this good earth and all the beauty therein.

"Mr. Pegleg," I said, patting the soil about the primrose, then dusting my fingers, "you need not take the trouble to plant me that violet bed; because, well — you see, I should have to die to behold it; and I am not ready to leave this life for

a long, long time yet. The flowers in this world are good enough for me—quite good enough.” Then I dug up another hardy green primrose and repotted that; while Nancy, beginning with soft, low trills and little gurgling warbles, lifted up his voice and sang as if one little body could not hold his love and praise for all creation.

Mr. Pegleg may have thought me a heathen, but he did not say so; he just sat nodding in the sunshine until I knew he was fast asleep, then I carefully pinned a newspaper about his head to keep off the heat, and left him, going down to the other end of the greenhouse to train vines.

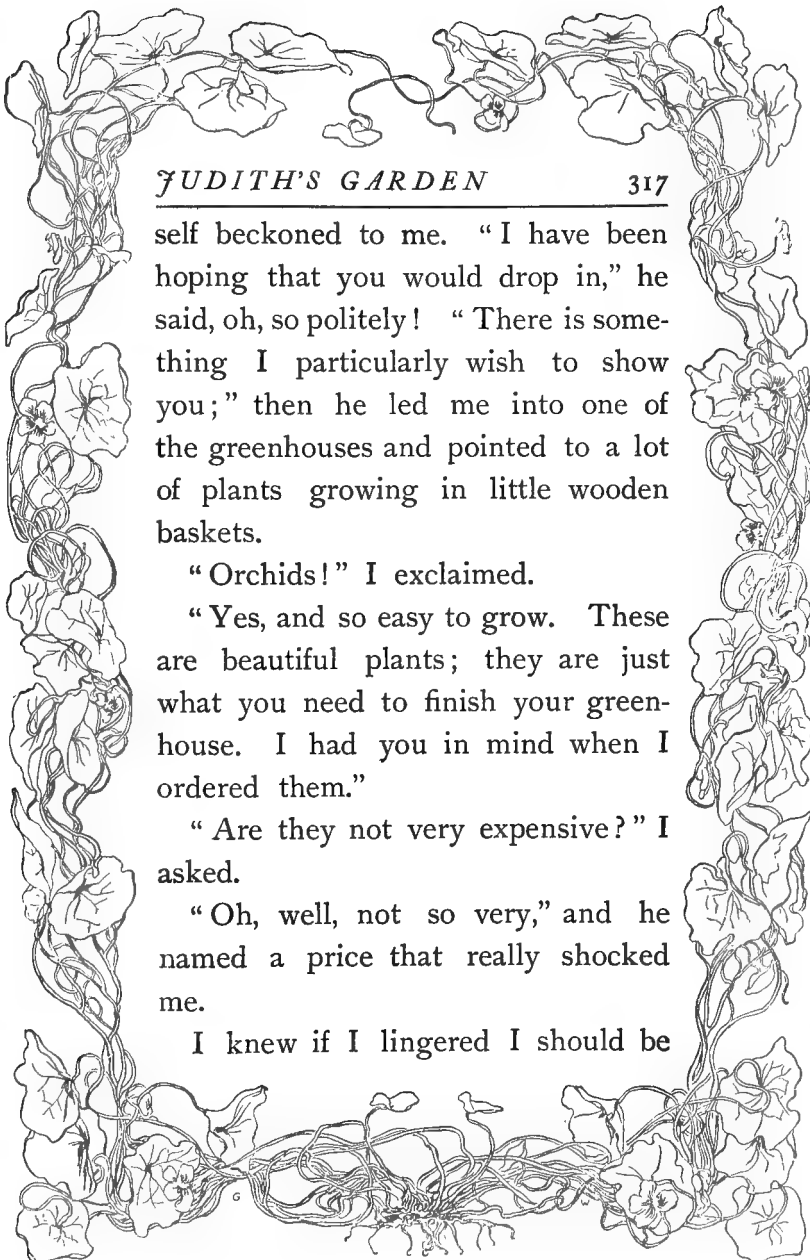
I
BUY
ORCHIDS

XXIII



SUPPOSE I have done something very wrong, but when I think of that polite, insinuating florist, I feel that he is more to blame than I am. It happened in this way: I was down town, and it occurred to me to step into Gerome & Co.'s, florists; not that I intended to buy anything, for how can one buy without money?

I had no sooner set my foot across the threshold than Mr. Gerome him-



self beckoned to me. "I have been hoping that you would drop in," he said, oh, so politely! "There is something I particularly wish to show you;" then he led me into one of the greenhouses and pointed to a lot of plants growing in little wooden baskets.

"Orchids!" I exclaimed.

"Yes, and so easy to grow. These are beautiful plants; they are just what you need to finish your greenhouse. I had you in mind when I ordered them."

"Are they not very expensive?" I asked.

"Oh, well, not so very," and he named a price that really shocked me.

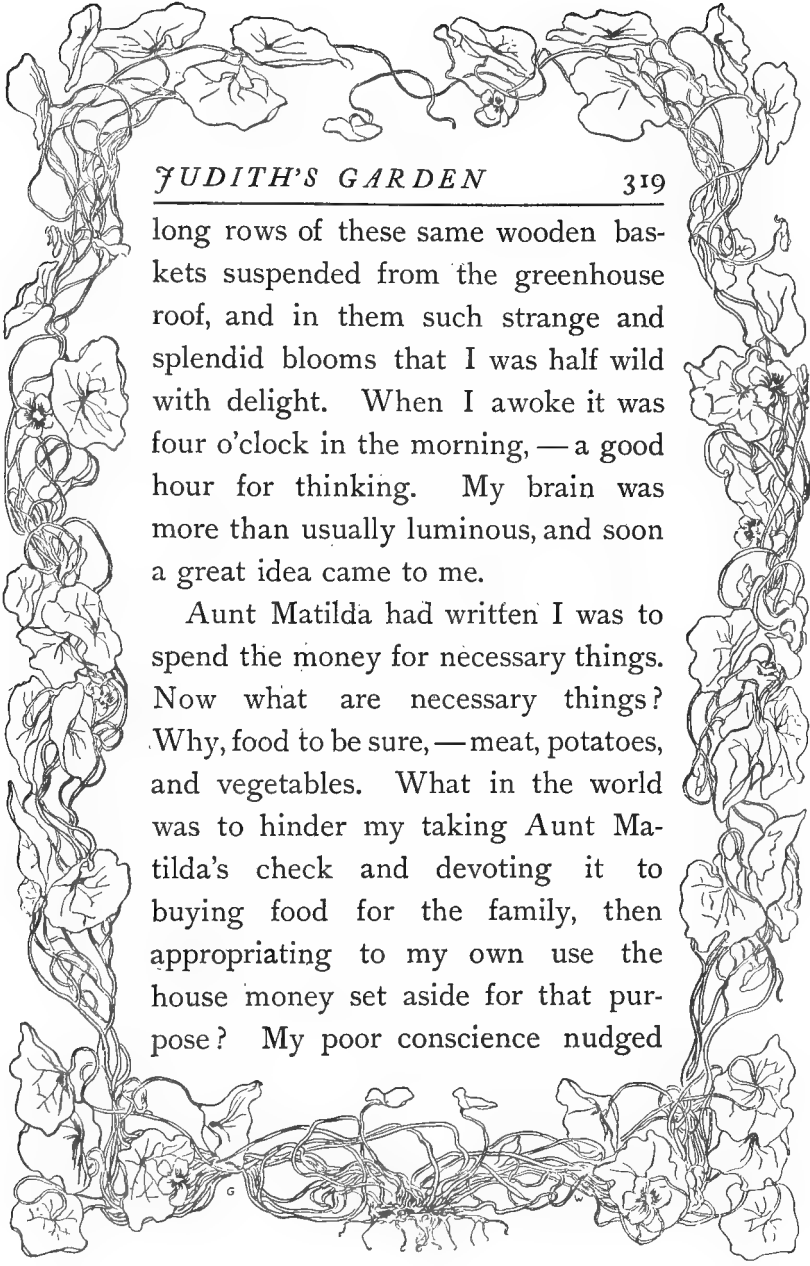
I knew if I lingered I should be

lost, for he is so persuasive. I said, "I am in a great hurry this morning; I will call again."

I went home, but Fate pursued me. On the hall table I found a letter from Aunt Matilda, and out of it dropped a check—her Christmas gift.

I love my aunt dearly, but her letter made me weep. Why must she always have a string tied to my pleasures? She wrote I was to spend this money for necessary articles, things that I most needed. By turning and twisting in every direction, I could not get the consent of my own conscience that orchids in wooden baskets came under the head of necessary articles.

That night I dreamed of seeing



long rows of these same wooden baskets suspended from the greenhouse roof, and in them such strange and splendid blooms that I was half wild with delight. When I awoke it was four o'clock in the morning, — a good hour for thinking. My brain was more than usually luminous, and soon a great idea came to me.

Aunt Matilda had written I was to spend the money for necessary things. Now what are necessary things? Why, food to be sure, — meat, potatoes, and vegetables. What in the world was to hinder my taking Aunt Matilda's check and devoting it to buying food for the family, then appropriating to my own use the house money set aside for that purpose? My poor conscience nudged

me a little at this decision, but I was callous. Such a feeling of relief as swept over me! I fell asleep, but woke again at six.

I shook Max. "Let's get up," I said.

"What for?" he inquired sleepily.

"I'm in a great hurry to go down town."

"But it is dark yet."

"Oh, well, it will be light soon;" and I hurried out of bed and was dressed and downstairs before Rhoda.

At precisely eight o'clock I stepped inside of Gerome & Co.'s store. I had decided to buy just one orchid, to try it; but when I came to look at them, I could not make up my mind as to the one I wanted; then that Mr. Gerome happened along,

and — well, you know how it ended :
I took the whole lot.

That afternoon I wrote to Aunt
Matilda.

“MY DEAR AUNT,” I said: “Thank
you for sending me such a liberal
check. The money shall go as you
say, for necessary articles. We need
food every day; how else could we
live? This very morning I bought
with it a fine young turkey, and to-
morrow I shall procure a brace of
ducks. We are all well. I have a
greenhouse, built for me by my
thoughtful husband. I am fast get-
ting it filled with plants.

“Do not worry about me, but if you
should happen to hear of a new speci-
men of flowers, do, oh, do! dear Aunt

Matilda, write at once to me. Give its common name and also its botanical name, so that I may make no mistake in procuring it.

"You ask in your letter what I intend giving my husband for Christmas? I have already planned to surprise him with a fine palm and a Boston fern.

"Thanking you again, dear Aunt, I am your loving niece,

"JUDITH."

I think that was a very good letter. I should hate to deceive my aunt.

I confess, her reply hurt me a little.

"MY DEAR NIECE," it ran: "Can it be possible that you were obliged to spend for food the money I sent you?"

Has your husband failed? Your letter so worried me that I fell into a nervous chill.

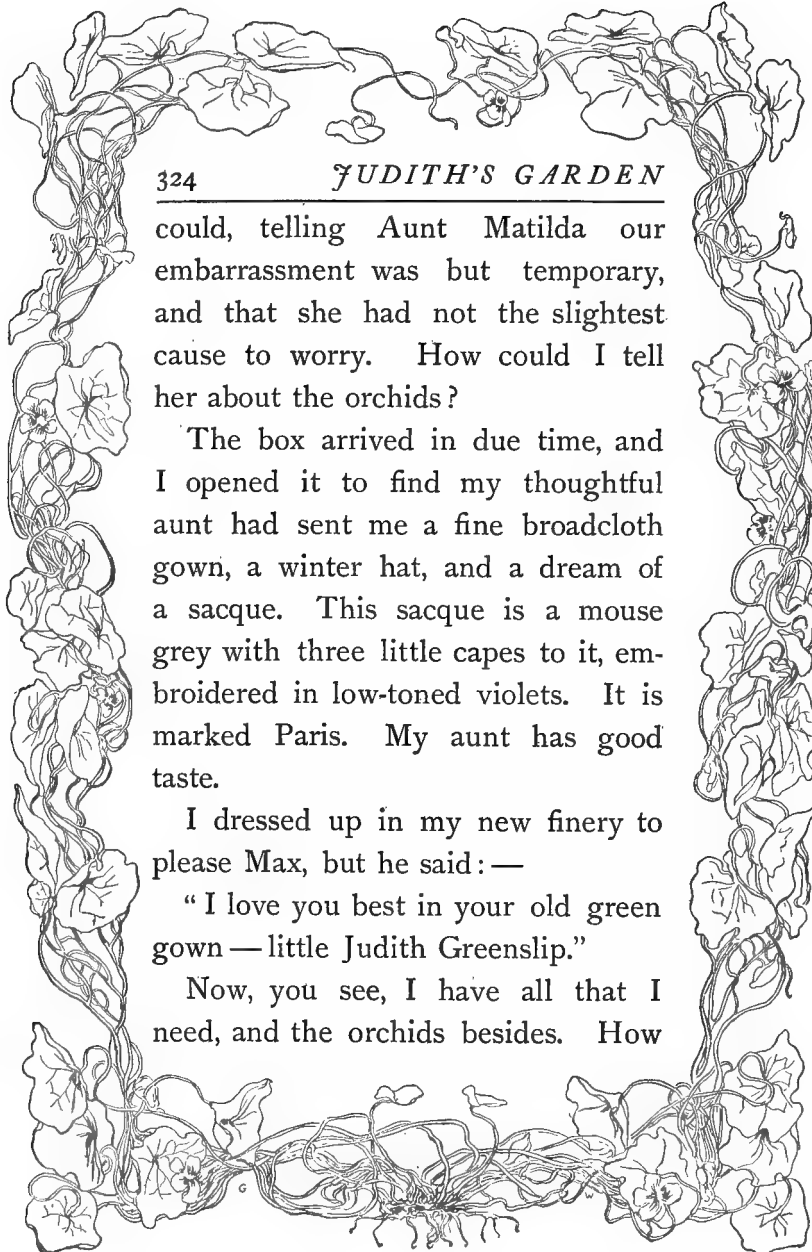
"Oh, my dear brother's only child! tell, tell your own aunt,—do you suffer? Are you stinted for food? If I do not hear from you at once, I shall be obliged to visit you in order to probe this state of affairs. I am not well, and a journey in winter is hard for me. Write at once and tell me the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

"Your loving

"AUNT MATILDA.

"P. S. I send you by express, to-day, a box containing clothing."

I did not dare to show this letter to Max. I answered it the best I



could, telling Aunt Matilda our embarrassment was but temporary, and that she had not the slightest cause to worry. How could I tell her about the orchids?

The box arrived in due time, and I opened it to find my thoughtful aunt had sent me a fine broadcloth gown, a winter hat, and a dream of a sacque. This sacque is a mouse grey with three little capes to it, embroidered in low-toned violets. It is marked Paris. My aunt has good taste.

I dressed up in my new finery to please Max, but he said: —

“I love you best in your old green gown — little Judith Greenslip.”

Now, you see, I have all that I need, and the orchids besides. How

great a thing is trust! "Cast your bread upon the waters," says the Scriptures. I say, to you who would be growers of green things, sow your bonnets and gowns and sacques. If needs be, go a little shabby, for you are investing in happiness. There is nothing like it on earth,—this growing close to nature's heart.

Mr. Pegleg helped me to put up the orchids. He held them while I mounted the step-ladder and hung the baskets, suspended by a string to stout little hooks. His serene old face beamed with happiness at my delight. I love that old man.

Last night, when Max and I were sitting alone, I suddenly said, "Dear, I intend to study the birds next year in connection with my garden."

Max laid down his newspaper.
"Thank God," he exclaimed, "Rhoda
is alive!"

Now what could Max mean by
that?



I
RECEIVE XXIV
MY REWARD

T HIS morning, as
I was reading a
letter from Pat,
Rhoda came to
tell me there was a gentleman in the
parlour wishing to see me.

“Let him wait,” I said, in an absent
manner; for my whole mind was set
upon deciphering my gardener’s chi-
rography. At last I made it out:—

“HONOURED MISSUS,” it ran: “I
sind ye an ox-alice which I raised in
me south windy. Put it in some nate

dirt wid good leakage, an' let the sun galoop roond it all day long. Soon 'twill blossom grand an' be a soight to faste yer eyes.

"This is a long winther. I've had a tooch o' rheumatiz from over-atein'. I begged Bridget not to put so much grease in the poy-crust, but she says it can't be hilped. The cook-book says tak' so much o' this an' so much o' that. Bedad, I've almost lost me religun along o' that cook-book!

"I've bin over to the place several toimes, an' do say it, things look as safe and snug as a silver saxpence in a Scotchman's pocket.

"Hoping, honoured missus, this may find ye well, and God bliss ye! I am yer faithful servant,

"PATRICK MONAHAN."

A good letter, and such a hardy, healthy oxalis! I ran into the greenhouse and thrust the plant into a bench of dirt. By and by I would pot it and set it in the sunniest spot I could find. When it blossomed forth like some dainty lady, all in pink, it could but remind me of the kindest little old Irishman alive.

Suddenly I thought of the gentleman in the parlour. I truly hoped it were not a florist, because I am so easily persuaded, and I could not see that I needed more in my greenhouse. However, as I had kept him waiting several minutes, I hastened to make myself presentable, and opening the door, encountered Mr. Tom Norton, home from Europe.

It gave me quite a shock to behold

him. I felt like running to put my arms around my dear earthly paradise, and crying out, "Oh, you cannot, you must not, claim it!"

He responded to my greeting in a most cordial manner. "Well," he asked a little later, "how did your garden grow? Were you troubled with bugs?"

"Oh, yes," I said solemnly, for an inward hope suddenly possessed me that I might so multiply those insects as to completely discourage Mr. Norton.

"I feared so," he said mournfully. "How I pitied you last summer! Of course those poor rose bushes were infested?"

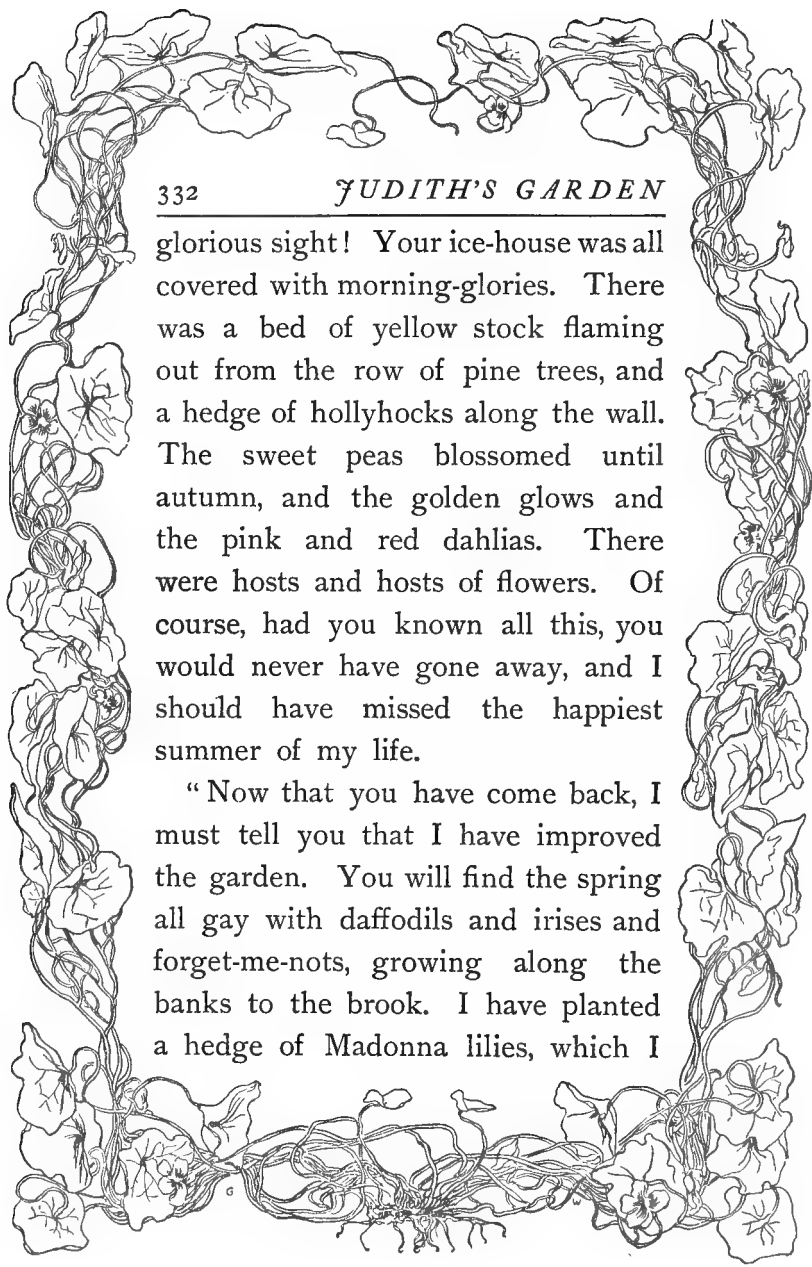
"Yes," I replied, "and the sweet peas, the nasturtiums, and the golden

glows. There were all kinds and conditions of bugs in that garden, but —”

“Do I not know?” he broke in. “I often told Mrs. Norton I feared I had not done my duty in explaining to you the difficulties of gardening.”

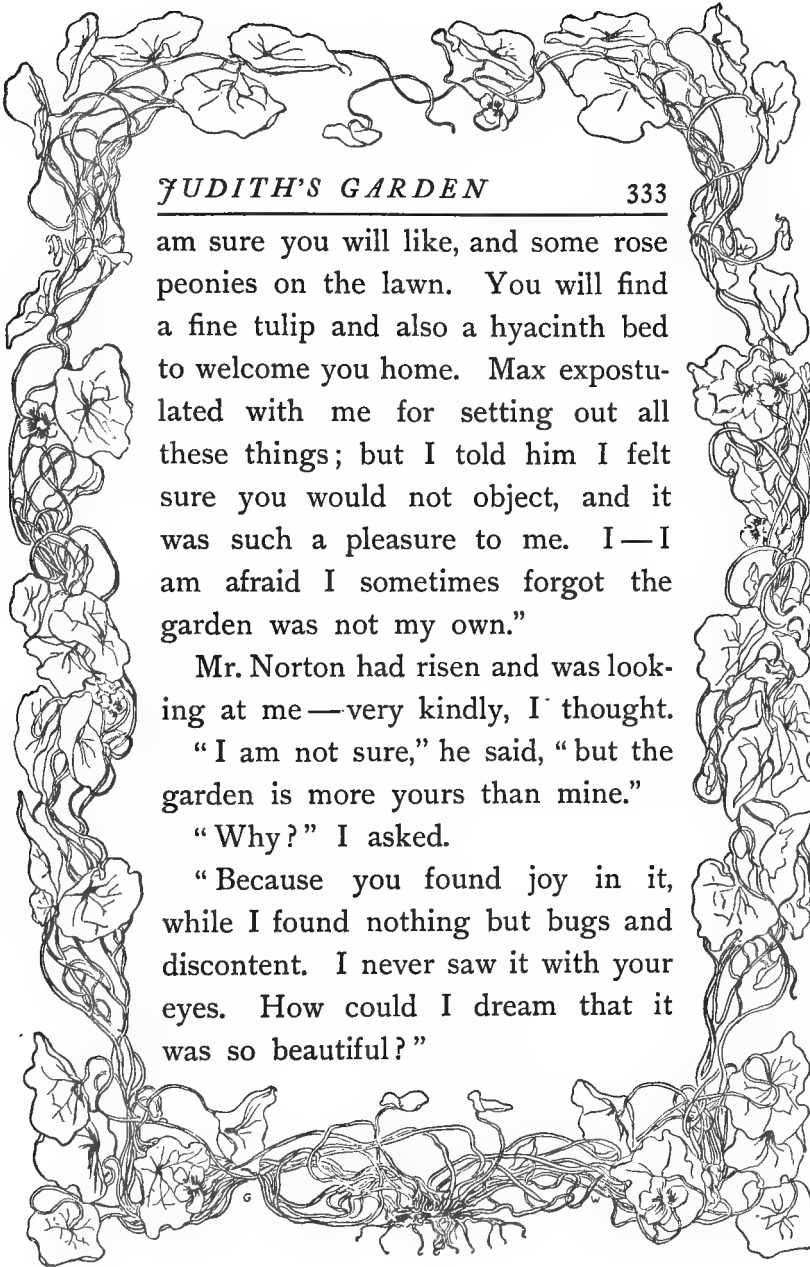
Should I allow him to go on in this way, believing in my failure when success had crowned my every effort? I could not; I dared not.

“Mr. Norton,” I said briskly, “you did not allow me to finish my sentence. I was about to tell you that I killed those bugs, every one. There are plenty of poisons, and I was energetic. I found that garden the sweetest, dearest spot on earth; and oh! you ought to have seen my roses growing on your bushes — such a



glorious sight! Your ice-house was all covered with morning-glories. There was a bed of yellow stock flaming out from the row of pine trees, and a hedge of hollyhocks along the wall. The sweet peas blossomed until autumn, and the golden glows and the pink and red dahlias. There were hosts and hosts of flowers. Of course, had you known all this, you would never have gone away, and I should have missed the happiest summer of my life.

“Now that you have come back, I must tell you that I have improved the garden. You will find the spring all gay with daffodils and irises and forget-me-nots, growing along the banks to the brook. I have planted a hedge of Madonna lilies, which I



am sure you will like, and some rose peonies on the lawn. You will find a fine tulip and also a hyacinth bed to welcome you home. Max expostulated with me for setting out all these things; but I told him I felt sure you would not object, and it was such a pleasure to me. I—I am afraid I sometimes forgot the garden was not my own."

Mr. Norton had risen and was looking at me—very kindly, I thought.

"I am not sure," he said, "but the garden is more yours than mine."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because you found joy in it, while I found nothing but bugs and discontent. I never saw it with your eyes. How could I dream that it was so beautiful?"

He went away smiling, and a little sad feeling settled around my heart. I should have wept, I believe, but for Mr. Pegleg. I found him in the greenhouse waiting for me. He was admiring a great American Beauty rose that had blossomed out that morning.

"Oh, how exquisite!" he said.

"Isn't it!" I cried. Then Mr. Pegleg and I fell to adoring that rose exactly like a couple of Persians. First he smelled it, then I smelled it. We even tried to count the crumpled petals. We admired its long stout stalk and fresh green leaves. Mr. Pegleg felt sure it was the finest rose that ever grew, but I remembered a larger one in my garden — no, Tom Norton's garden —

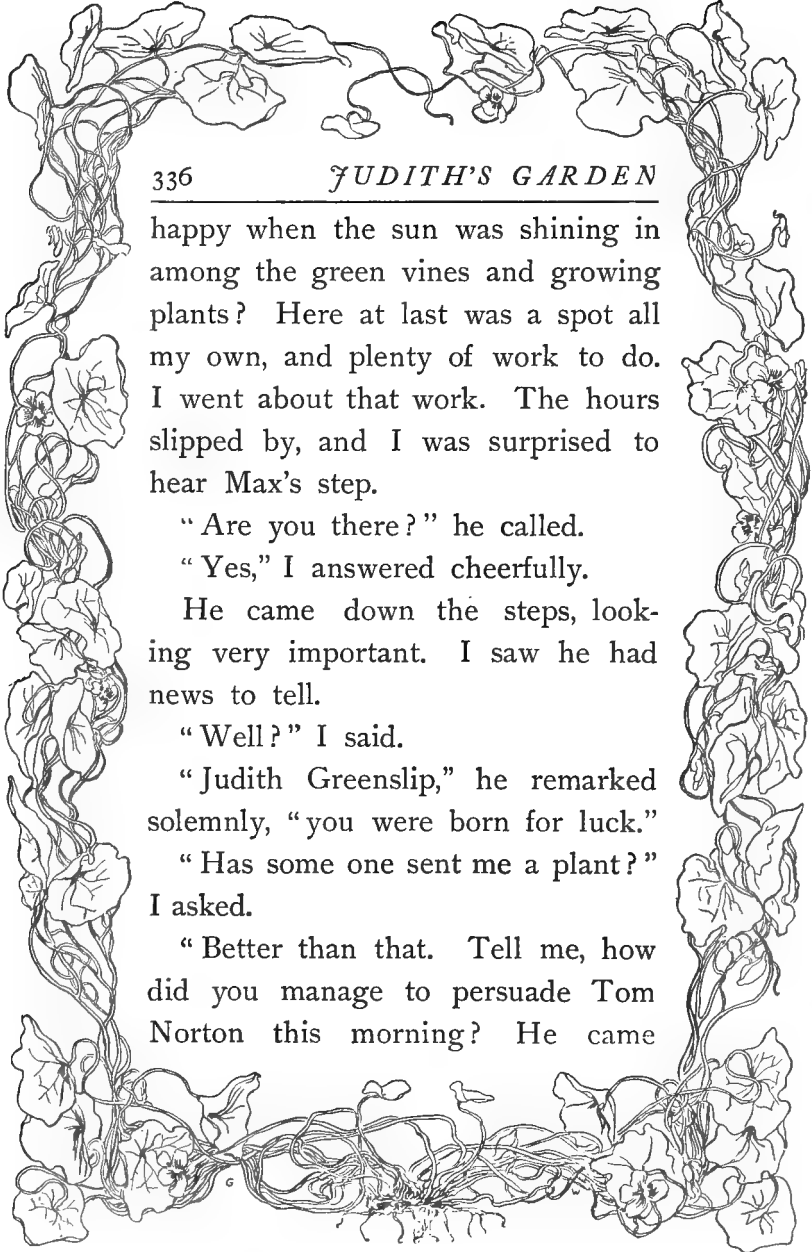
and demurred. At last, to convince him, I measured it. "Not quite so large," I said, "but it does very well for an indoor rose"; then I took the big shears and cut it off.

"Oh," sighed Mr. Pegleg.

"There is another bud to bloom to-morrow," I said. "I shall lose nothing. I hear your niece is ill. Perhaps when she beholds such a perfect construction of health and beauty, it may help her to get well."

"It ought to," said Mr. Pegleg. "How her eyes will brighten when she sees it! I call it one of God's kindly expressions." He took the rose and hobbled out of the back door. Nancy began to sing.

I found a jar and planted my oxalis. How could I feel very un-



happy when the sun was shining in among the green vines and growing plants? Here at last was a spot all my own, and plenty of work to do. I went about that work. The hours slipped by, and I was surprised to hear Max's step.

"Are you there?" he called.

"Yes," I answered cheerfully.

He came down the steps, looking very important. I saw he had news to tell.

"Well?" I said.

"Judith Greenslip," he remarked solemnly, "you were born for luck."

"Has some one sent me a plant?" I asked.

"Better than that. Tell me, how did you manage to persuade Tom Norton this morning? He came

straight from the house to my office and fairly insisted that I should buy his place. He said, 'Somehow your wife has managed to transform that particular spot of earth into a second Garden of Eden; and this time Eve shall not be turned out.'



